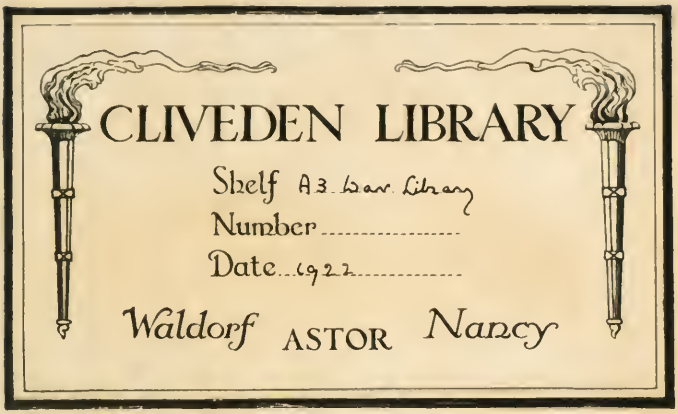
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E. J. KENNEDY

WITH THE IMMORTAL SEVENTH DIVISION

By the Rev.
E. J. KENNEDY
Chaplain Major to The Expeditionary Force.

With a Preface by the Right Reverend the
LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

FOURTH EDITION

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO
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TO

MY WIFE

AND

HELP-MATE OF MANY YEARS.

PREFACE

THIS little record bears the impress of the character of its writer—simple, manly, open-hearted towards man, and devout towards God.

I have read a great part of it with keen interest. Written without strain, from fresh personal experience, and with great sympathy for the officers and men of our Army, it gives a very lively picture of a chaplain's work at the Front, and the scenes and conditions under which it is done.

Mr. Kennedy's commanding stature, and fine physical manhood, gave him advantages which his fine character and genial nature used, by God's grace, to the best effect.

Having known him, and admired him

So simple in his faith, so fearless and powerful in his preaching, he was a man who wielded an influence almost unique in this country. Those who have been benefited by his ministry are not counted by hundreds but by tens of hundreds. His influence with the men at the Front was extraordinary. A soldier writes, 'I was awfully sorry to hear of Mr. Kennedy's death. It came so sudden too. I expect he would not wish for a better death than dying practically in his country's cause. He will be greatly missed, his place will not be easily filled. Unfortunately there are not many men of his stamp in the world. He was "white" all through, a thing as rare as it is valuable. He was a real manly Christian gentleman.' This letter is typical of hundreds which have been received from all parts of the world, including the Front, so wide and far reaching was the sweep of his influence.

Of him it may be truly said, 'He was God's man.' Many in all schools of thought and walks of life, as they think of him to-day will unconsciously say to themselves what the poet has expressed—

> "This is the happy warrior, this is he
> Whom every man in arms should wish to be."

Well done! thou good and faithful servant.

J. H.

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THE SEVENTH DIVISION

CHAPTER I

THE SEVENTH DIVISION

'A TELEGRAM, sir!' and a mounted orderly who had ridden over from Larkhill, stood outside my tent at the Bustard's Camp, Salisbury Plain, at 5 a.m., on September 17, 1914.

In that remote part of the world so removed from the benefits of ordinary life, we were yet in receipt of our daily papers at that early hour in the morning, and I was enjoying a twenty-four hours' history of the world, at the moderate price of a penny, when the brief tones of the orderly aroused me from its perusal. Its contents were startling: 'You have been selected for immediate foreign service. Report yourself early to-morrow morning at the War Office.'

For some days past I had been doing duty with my Territorial Battalion, the 7th Hants; but daily I had been hoping that I might be able to throw in my lot with the great mass of men, who had volunteered at the call of King and country.

During the month of August I had been shut up at the Riffel Alp with some seventy other unfortunates; kicking our heels in enforced ignorance when we would fain have been near the centre of information, if not of service. Unable to travel owing to the railways of Switzerland and France being required for the mobilization of troops, we could only possess our souls in patience. It was a time never to be forgotten, for although our English blood was stirred by the rumours that reached us of an expeditionary force being landed in France, under General Sir John French, and of even greater significance, the mobilization of the

English Fleet, yet our only source of information was derived from the Corriere della Sera, the communiqués of which were supplied by the Wolff Agency. Our state of mind can be readily imagined when I mention such points of *reliable* news as the 'Destruction of the English Fleet; Death of Sir John French; Invasion of England; London taken; Bank of England in flames.' Of course we knew that this was false, and yet there was no possibility of rebutting the statements.

For nearly a month we alternated between hope and fear. The effect of the bright Swiss sunshine would at times render us optimistic, and then the fall of night would once more see us plunged into the depths of a helpless pessimism. However, the time came when the little English colony struggled through the difficulties of railway transport, and arrived once more in the region of authentic information. The journey

home, which occupied three days, was full of interest, for France was throbbing with 'la guerre' and 'la gloire'; train after train with troops bound for the Front, swept by us; while at Lyons we encountered an ambulance train full of wounded, and another of German prisoners. My party had the advantage of travelling with the wife and son of a Cabinet Minister, and through Sir E. Grey's kind solicitude for his colleague's people, the best possible accommodation was provided for us, but even that powerful interest was not always sufficient to prevent delay and discomfort. On reaching Creil, the junction for Belgium, we found the station full of English troops in their retreat from Mons, and many were the stirring stories gathered from our retiring, but not disheartened men. The spirit of the French troops much impressed us; unaccompanied, my ladies went among them with confidence, and on every hand were treated with the

consideration of gentlemen. I remarked on this to a French gentleman who was travelling with us, and he said with warranted pride, 'But they are gentlemen, monsieur.' Some of the wounded French took the greatest interest in describing to us the circumstances under which they had been hit,—some, as the manner of soldiers is, displayed the bullet or piece of shrapnel which had laid them low.

Nearly all the troop trains going to the Front were decorated with flowers and evergreens, whilst the stations and villages were alive with enthusiastic people assembled to cheer their men onward to their glorious and dangerous task.

It was with thankful hearts and very travel-stained persons that we finally reached home, heartily agreeing after our exciting experiences that a little goes a long way.

I had at the earliest moment possible volunteered my services to the Army

Chaplains Department, but was informed that there was no prospect at that time of my being called upon; accordingly I joined my Territorial Battalion, under Colonel Park, and was awaiting a summons to service, here, there, or anywhere, when, as I have described, the call came. I have often wondered why the War Office always springs upon one with such alarming suddenness; possibly it is the way of the Army; it is certainly disconcerting, although it is educational, for it teaches one to be always ready and alert for any emergency.

And now the order had come, and there was hurrying to and fro; a rapid dash home; a putting together of kit which would be required in the unknown life about to be entered upon. A last night at home; and then the reporting of oneself at the War Office; the signing of a contract for twelve months' service; a medical examination as to physical fitness; an hour or two's shopping at

Harrods (where one developed a tendency to think of everything not wanted, and to forget what was really useful); and finally Waterloo Station, that scene of many farewells. 'Good-bye' has so many significations. It may be uttered at the parting for a couple of hours; it may be uttered, and often is, in these days as the final word on earth to much loved ones. Oh, these partings! how they pull a man's heart to pieces; and yet, with that remarkable insularity which characterizes our race,—or should I say races—it is one of the things seldom or never mentioned among men on service; and yet I suppose it is always uppermost in a man's mind. Again and again I have lit upon men in out of the way corners, reading a well worn letter, or perchance gazing at a photograph, every facial lineament of which was already well stamped upon the mind of the gazer. It is one of the mental attitudes which go to form a spirit of

comradeship; the feeling that it is all part of the game, and we are most of us tarred with the same brush.

I had received my orders at the War Office, to join the Seventh Division then mobilizing at Lyndhurst.

The Seventh Division! that meant very little to me, and indeed to the public generally at that time, but what it signified to the nation will be more fully appreciated when the history of this war is written.

It may be interesting to give particulars of the composition of that, which I believe is the first Division ever to march out of an English camp fully equipped.

Under the command of Major-General T. Capper, C.B., D.S.O.,[1] now Sir Thomson Capper, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., it represented the very flower of our Army, possessing a Staff of most capable officers.

[1] This brilliant officer was killed in action at the end of September, 1915.

It consisted of :—

Divisional Signal Company ;
Divisional Mounted troops ;
Northumberland Hussars ;
Cycle Company ;
Four Brigades of Artillery (R.H.A., R.F.A., R.G.A.) ;
Two Batteries R.G.A. ;
Divisional Ammunition Column ;
Divisional Engineers, two Field Companies ;
20th Infantry Brigade,—
Brig.-General H. G. Ruggles Brise, M.V.O. ;
Brigade-Major A. B. E. Cator.

2nd Scots Guards ;
1st Grenadier Guards ;
2nd Border Regiment ;
2nd Gordon Highlanders ;
21st Infantry Brigade,—
Brig. H. E. Watts, C.B. ;
Brigade-Major Captain W. Drysdale.

2nd Bedford Regiment;
2nd Yorks;
2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers;
2nd Wiltshire Regiment;
22nd Infantry Brigade—
Brig. S. T. B. Lawford;
Brigade-Major Captain G. M. James, The Buffs.

2nd The Queens;
2nd Royal Warwick Regiment;
1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers;
1st South Staffs Regiment.

Divisional Train;
Four Companies Divisional Medical Units;
21st Field Ambulance;
22nd „ „
23rd „ „

The mobilization of a Division for Active Service is a vast business; everything has to be thought of and provided; there must be a thorough equipment

for the men, horses, and transport; medical stores, saddlery, farriery, etc., etc., not a thing must be forgotten, for in those early days of the war there was no well-equipped Ordnance Department on the other side. Each Field Ambulance is a dispensary on wheels, comprising the hundred and one field comforts which warfare rightly provides for the lamentable wrecks that pass through the hands of the R.A.M.C.

The question of horses is no slight undertaking, and certainly gives rise to no little heartburning, as every mounted officer naturally tries to secure a good mount. To me it was a specially serious matter; when a man walks 15.8 and rides another two stone at least, considerable care has to be exercised in the selection of his equine friend, who has to bear with him the fatigues, trials and risks of a campaign. I shall ever feel the deepest obligation to Captain Kennedy Shaw, O.C., Remounts Depart-

ment, Salisbury, for supplying me with one of the best horses I have ever ridden ; a big upstanding bay, with black points ; deep chested ; good quarters ; with the most perfect manners, even under the heaviest fire, which could be desired. Strangely enough his name (which was tied to his halter) was ' Ora Pro Nobis,' a not inapt cognomen for a padré's horse. He must have come out of a good stable, and I often felt that some one must have hoped that he would fall into good hands. Should this by any chance be read by the owner, let me say that both my groom and I took the greatest care of my good steed until the day when German shrapnel ushered him into ' the eternal hayfield.'

They were happy days at Lyndhurst, where the Division remained for a fortnight. The future stress of awful losses was only a bare possibility then, although it was on the horizon of many men's hearts ; but at the time it was ignored,

for many of the officers had their women folk staying, either in the village, or near at hand; and the lawn of the 'Crown,' the Divisional Head-quarters, was a bright and happy centre of pleasurable intercourse.

It was a strange experience to be ushered into the very vortex of a soldier's life, although my experience of military camp life was not a new one; in far back years happy service in a kilted regiment had left a mark which time has not effaced.

A very cordial reception from General Capper set me at my ease; whilst Brig.-General Ruggles Brise, to whose Brigade I was attached, and to whose kindness and courtesy I owe much, assured me of the good will of the powers that be. The General posted me to the 20th Brigade—a noble appointment indeed; for such troops as the Grenadier Guards, Scots Guards, Gordon Highlanders and Border Regiment were good enough for any man.

The Parade Services I held while at Lyndhurst were an inspiration. The prayer card issued by the Chaplain-General was greatly appreciated by officers and men. I arranged for the distribution of 15,000 of them in the Division, and they were eagerly accepted by all from the Generals downwards. On many an occasion in the after days I came across these cards tucked away in the lining of the caps of dead and wounded men. Nothing can exceed the beautiful simplicity of the prayer, a copy of which I venture to insert :—

A Soldier's Prayer.

Almighty and most Merciful Father,
Forgive me my sins :
Grant me thy peace :
Give me thy power :
Bless me in life and death,
For Jesus Christ's sake.
Amen.

(On the reverse side.)

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever.

Amen.

The other Chaplains of the Division were :—

Church of England: The Rev. Hon. T. George Maurice Peel, 21st Brigade.

Presbyterian: The Rev. W. Stevenson Jaffray.

Roman Catholic: The Rev. Father Moth.

It was on October 4 when my wife,

daughter and myself were about to take tea with Captain Douglas of the Staff—alas! now dead—and his wife, that he hurriedly rode out of the 'Crown' saying, 'The order has come to stand by.' The news was welcome, for we were growing weary of waiting. Immediately the troops began to move off; the unit to which I was attached—23rd Field Ambulance which served the 20th Brigade—left at 2.45 a.m., reaching Southampton about six. It is of interest to note that a Division of troops of over 15,000 men makes a brave show upon the road, its length from the van to the rear being not less than twelve miles.

Apparently the cheering folk along the road passed a sleepless night, for at every hamlet and village people lined the road, waving us their farewells; and from many a cottage window kindly faces could be seen silhouetted against the light of the room, cheering us onward with hearty words.

The embarkation at Southampton was a busy scene, and took many hours to accomplish, but finally fourteen huge transports got under way, and steamed up Channel for Dover. There we 'stood off and on' until 9 p.m. on October 6, when picking up our pilot we steamed out into the Down in the quiet of the autumn night.

The names of the officers who composed the mess of the 23rd Field Ambulance were: Major Crawford (now Lieut.-Colonel), Major Brown, Captain Wright, Lieut. McCutcheon, Lieut. Mackay, Lieut. Hart, Lieut. Priestly, Lieut. Wedd, Lieut. Beaumont, Lieut. Jackson (quartermaster), Col. the Rev. W. Stevenson Jaffray, and the writer; on the whole a very cheery, hard-working set of officers, whose work met with high appreciation of Head-quarters, in due course.

Many conjectures were on foot as to our destination, but when we found the

course was north-east, we knew that France was out of the question, and Belgium loomed large in our imagination.

The scene was an eerie one as the black hulls of the vessel moved quietly over the placid sea, with a protective squadron of torpedo destroyers surrounding us. It was sufficiently risky to give a piquance to the experience.

The Admiralty had laid mines from the Goodwin Sands to the Belgium coast, and it was a remarkable feat of pilotage which took the whole fleet through this mine zone in safety to its destination. The naval officer who acted as pilot to the *Victorian*, on which I was aboard, informed me the next morning that it had been the most anxious night of his life, and I can well understand it, for the responsibility upon a man, under such circumstances, was a heavy one.

Coming on deck in the early hours of

the following morning I saw the low-lying Belgium coast bathed in sunlight; Zeebrugge lying a couple of miles to the east. It was with a very thankful heart that I realized that the first risky stage of our movement towards the Front was over.

In due course we warped in alongside of the massive Mole at Zeebrugge; and admired the huge proportions of a quay, which I understood had been built by the Germans. Large as it was, there was not sufficient room for all the fleet of transports, so half the Division landed at Ostend and joined us later.

The landing scene was stirring, and full of interest. All sorts of troops were mixed together in apparently inextricable confusion; Guardsmen, Highlanders, Linesmen, Sappers, Gunners, Cavalry and the ubiquitous A.S.C. were moving about in the keen delight of being on the soil that they had come to free from the oppressor; but the

miracle of military order and discipline soon evolved order out of chaos; and the whole column moved off for its nine or ten mile trek to Bruges.

With elastic step and cheery voice the men swung along to the inspiring strains of 'Tipperary.' The road was typical of Belgium; the long avenue of poplar trees, flanked by broad ditches, being the distinguishing feature of this and most Belgium roads (the centre being composed of cobbles, with macadam tracks on either side). Every one felt keen, and the horses, fresh from forty-eight hours' confinement in their very close quarters between decks, enjoyed the freedom as much as the men.

On reaching Bruges, which was in total darkness, owing to the fear of enemy aeroplanes, we received our instructions to proceed to an outlying suburb of the city; and presently drew up in a field, bounded by houses of the humbler description. The early morning was dis-

tinctly autumnal, and a ration of biscuit, bully beef and steaming hot tea was not to be despised. Late though it was, many people were about, occupying themselves by gazing, half in wonderment and half in admiration, at the first visit of khaki to their neighbourhood.

THE TREK THROUGH BELGIUM

CHAPTER II

THE TREK THROUGH BELGIUM

MY first experience of billeting was sufficient to prove the very arbitrary character of the whole proceeding. Imagine some one hundred and fifty men, and twelve officers, suddenly appearing in a small outlying street of the far-famed Belgian city, at the untimely hour of 4 a.m., and all clamouring for a night's lodging. To begin with, it was not an easy matter to arouse the slumbering people; and the billeting party had to wait long before each door, ere slippered feet were heard along passages, and drowsy voices inquired suspiciously as to our business; then appeared more or less clad figures, who gazed anxiously

at the cloaked men standing at the door (for the Germans lay at the back of every mind). However, the talismanic charm of 'Englishmen' did wonders. It was 4.30 a.m. before I tumbled into an extremely comfortable bed, and had barely laid my head upon the pillow—so it seemed—when a great knocking at the door aroused me with a start from vivid dreams of home, as an orderly entered the room with the alarming statement that the column was moving off in ten minutes. It was seven o'clock, and I felt inclined for another twelve hours in bed; there were no ablutions that morning. A flying leap into my clothes; a most indiscriminate packing of my valise, which I left my servant struggling with, in an inexperienced attempt to roll it up correctly, and I swallowed a cup of coffee which my kind hostess had provided for me (why is coffee always so hot when one is in a hurry?), and I mounted my horse in

the nick of time to fall in with my column as it moved off.

It was a long weary march over a very flat country, intersected with dykes, and only broken by the ubiquitous poplar trees; and one had ample time to think, and sometimes doze, as we marched along on our twenty-five mile trek. At the midday halt, a little diversion enlivened the proceedings in the shape of pulling two bogged horses out of a narrow cut where they had been 'watered.' We managed with the help of ropes and planks to get the poor brutes on to terra firma again, more dead than alive.

Then on and on, hour after hour, halting ten minutes each hour for a needed breather and rest, until Ostend hove in sight. Visions of a comfortable billet rose before one's luxurious mind, but no such luck; right through the city we marched, finding the station square crammed with terror-stricken and

most wretched-looking refugees; until, some four miles out, we lighted upon the most filthy and forsaken place to be found on the map of civilization—Steene. The houses were so vile and malodorous, that it was with great reluctance the O.C. allowed the men to enter. By this time it was very dark and very cold, and it was with purely animal instinct that we found the way to our mouths in the darkness, and tried to make believe that we enjoyed the biscuit and bully beef which formed our rations.

Then came the somewhat important question of where to sleep. I deemed myself among the fortunate in securing a stretcher, and dossed in a transport wagon; a tired man might have a worse bed than that, and I slept the sleep of the weary and, as I would fain hope, of the righteous.

The following morning, as it seemed likely that we should remain at Steene

for at least another day, I cast round for something more comfortable in the way of a billet, and had secured three rooms at the worthy Burgomaster's for the O.C., Mr. Jaffray and myself, and was about to enjoy a more or less comfortable tea in the open, when an orderly rode up with orders to trek back to Bruges.

In a few minutes the camp was struck, and once more we moved on. I felt that I could enter into the spirit of the well-known refrain—

The brave old Duke of York,
He had ten thousand men.
He marched them up to the top of a hill,
And he marched them down again.
And when they were up, they were up;
And when they were down, they were down;
And when they were half-way up the hill,
They were neither up or down.

As we retraced our steps through Ostend, we found a large and acclaiming crowd lining the route. As I rode just

behind the Gordons, who were marching with their usual swinging step, I was amused to hear a Belgian woman ask her friend, 'And who are those?' pointing to the Highlanders. 'Oh,' was the reply, 'those are the wives of the English soldiers.' The gay Gordons were greatly incensed on my setting before them their new status.

In the centre of the city I came across my friend Peel (padré of the 22nd Brigade; he has since won a military cross, and gained the universal love of his men by his gallant conduct and splendid ministry). He had somehow or other lost his Brigade, and being thus stranded, had slung his batman up behind him on his horse and was proceeding with unruffled dignity in the direction of the line of march.

It was late at night and raining as it seldom rains in dear old England, when we splashed ankle deep in water, over the cobbled streets of Bruges, the stones

being too slippery to permit of riding. Hungry and tired we slouched along, until we came to the Monastery of St. Xavier, at St. Michel, some two miles out of the city. Never shall I forget the kindness extended to us by the lay brothers; especially one, Brother Sylvester. I hope if these lines should ever reach his eye, that he will accept the grateful thanks of those who benefited by the charitable goodness of the Order, and especially his own.

The men were speedily billeted in sweet straw, laid down in the upper dormitories of the building; whilst the hundred and twenty horses were stalled in the spacious stables; and beds provided for the officers in the dormitories. But what was better still, after the men had been attended to (and this is the invariable rule, men first) we regaled ourselves upon tea and bread and butter in the bakehouse, where, in front of the huge fire, we toasted our benumbed

extremities and dried our sodden clothing. After such a night's rest, as only comes to fagged-out men, we awoke to a golden-tinted autumn morning, which brought to us the joy of living; and once more we felt ready for the onward trek. I have since learned that the Division was originally destined to relieve Antwerp, but the sudden fall of the city set the enemy free to march on Calais; and so the Seventh Division, with the Third Cavalry Division, under Sir Julian Byng, the whole commanded by Sir Henry Rawlinson, was sent post haste to intercept his advance in the neighbourhood of Ypres. And thus the small force of under thirty thousand men pressed on to the heroic task of holding up the main body of the enemy; not less than two hundred and forty thousand men.

Later on I shall have something to say about the prolonged encounter which is historically known as the 'first battle

of Ypres.' But meantime it may be of interest to my readers to give an outline of our rapid trek through Belgium.

Leaving our hospitable quarters at Bruges, the column, which seemed interminable, marched to Beernem. At this place I was fortunate enough, with my brother chaplain, Mr. Jaffray, through the forethought of Mr. Peel, to secure a bed. The accommodation was rough, and the little estaminet was crowded with officers, who were only too thankful to sleep on any floor where there was a chance of putting down a valise. I particularly remember this billet, for I thought that I had a chance of distinguishing myself by capturing a spy. Orders had been issued, stating that a certain 'Captain Walker,' posing as a R.A.M.C. officer, was visiting our troops, and picking up stray crumbs of information; should such a person be encountered he was to be immediately arrested. I had just turned in, when amid the babel

of conversation which came from downstairs, I caught the name 'Walker.' Slipping quietly down the ladder which served as a staircase, I listened for a moment or two at the door, and from what I heard, gathered that I had spotted my man; and suddenly appearing as an apparition in pyjamas, I inquired in somewhat stentorian tones which was Captain Walker? A rosy-cheeked subaltern somewhat sheepishly admitted that he was Lieut. Walker, and I found my hopes dashed to the ground. This was not my only encounter with spies, supposed or real, of which more anon.

A morning stay at Beernem enabled me to improvise a Parade Service, it being Sunday; which was apparently heartily joined in by those attending. The opportunities for such work by chaplains on the trek are few and far between, and it is a question of

> Seizing the current when it serves,
> Or losing our ventures.

Leaving Beernem, our route led us through Wynghene. It was here I seized the opportunity of displaying my undoubted ability as mess president, to which post I had been appointed. At the midday halt in this village, I was anxiously looking about for bread, eggs, vegetables or any other commodity which would embellish the festal board of the mess, and thus win the gratitude of my always hungry brother officers, when, through an open door, I caught sight of fowls in a backyard. I promptly jumped off my horse, and entered into negotiations with the owners of the chicken run, which speedily resulted in the decapitated corpses of three plump fowls being slung from my saddle. Amid the envy of the column, I proudly rode down to the transport of my unit with my spoil, the result being that in a short time not a fowl remained alive in the village; and that night every mess was redolent with the delicious scent of roast fowl.

Our next billet was at Eeghem, where a stone kitchen floor was the utmost we could secure for the officers, after having bedded the men in barns on luxurious beds of sweet straw. In the early morning, in company with Mr. Peel, I enjoyed a brief stroll in the neighbourhood. In the course of our walk we passed one of those small wayside chapels, which are dotted here and there all over Belgium; not larger than some eight feet square, it offered all the facilities that we needed for prayer and quiet thought.

As we approached Roulers, we found the town alive with people who had assembled to welcome that which they regarded as an army of deliverance from the dreaded Germans.

After billeting the officers with considerable difficulty—for naturally people at times resented the intrusion of hungry and travel-stained men into their spic and span houses—I secured a most comfortable room for myself in the house

of an old widow lady; one of those charming old world persons who are occasionally met with on life's journey, and who, by their innate courtesy and sympathy, accentuate the oneness of the human family. When a country is under martial law one cannot, of course, take 'no' for an answer in applying for a billet, and therefore, in the case of Belgium, one made the demand with the authority of 'in the king's name,' which invariably brought about the desired result. My dear old hostess could not do enough for me; with quavering accents she remarked, 'Thank God you English have come, for now we feel safe.' I must confess I felt very much of a hypocrite, for I knew that the enemy was pursuing us in hot haste. Indeed, a few hours afterwards they marched into the city, which they have held ever since.

As we pressed on to Ypres, via Zonnebec, our route ran alongside of the

railway, and it was a stirring sight to see the naval armoured train dash along, seeking for a pot shot at the enemy who was not far distant, the sailors forming the crew regarding the work as a sporting venture.

The first view of Ypres was glorious. As we marched through the great square in front of the Cloth Hall, I was struck with the mediæval aspect of the place. The gabled houses carried one's imagination into the long ago; whilst the glorious Cloth Hall of the eleventh century, backed up by the equally fine cathedral of similar age, presented a picture not easily to be forgotten. Alas! when I next saw it, the place was a heap of crumbling ruins.

The Germans had passed through the city four days before we arrived; and according to their wont, had helped themselves very liberally to what they fancied. Many of the shopkeepers were loud in their complaints of the shameful

manner in which they had been robbed.

I was able to secure most excellent billets for the mess in the house of Monsieur and Madame Angillis. These good people were in a state of considerable fear, for, not only had they two sons fighting in the Belgian army, one of whom had been wounded, but as the owners of considerable property in the city and the neighbourhood, they were anxious as to what the future would bring. Their worst fears have been realized, and I am afraid they are among the great mass of sufferers in unhappy Belgium. Their daughter was rendering splendid service in the Belgian Red Cross, and proved a great help in directing me to wounded British soldiers, who might otherwise have been lost sight of.

By this time fighting was in full swing, and our men had thrown up the first line of trenches in semi-circular form, some six or seven miles to the east of the town.

Very soon the wounded and German prisoners made their appearance, and doctors and chaplains were busily engaged. Most of the prisoners had a very scared look, for we learned afterwards that they had been told that we cut our prisoners' throats, or shot them out of hand, and their joy was great at finding even their personal belongings restored to them.

I was much struck with the characteristic behaviour of 'Tommy Atkins' to these men; even to the extent of sharing his rations with them, and handing out his 'fags,' which was an act of real self-denial.

I owe my grateful thanks to one Uhlan, whose saddle fell to my lot, and which I henceforth used, and regarded as one of the most comfortable I have ever ridden on.

A singularly unfortunate case came under my notice among the first batch of wounded brought in. An officer of

the 'Borders' in the dead of night, hearing as he thought a German advance, left his trench to reconnoitre, and after a fruitless search was returning to his men in the thick early morning mist, when a sentinel, ignorant of his having gone out, shot him as he approached the trenches. The poor chap was badly hit in the lungs, and made a brave struggle for life, but alas! died a few hours afterwards.

The Divisional Head-quarters being established at Ypres, my unit moved out to its Brigade, which occupied the line of trenches in the neighbourhood of Zandvoorde.

Arriving at our position in the dusk of a quickly parting day, we found ourselves actually posted in front of the firing line. Disagreeable as the experience was, there was nothing for it but to stick it. In a wood close by, the enemy had machine guns, supported by a body of Uhlans. Disturbing sniping

took place at intervals through the night, which rendered the bivouac unpleasant in the extreme. We slept on the ground between the wagons; and under the circumstances I felt it wise to keep as low down as possible, as 'fire' is in no sense discriminating.

Our Brigade Head-quarters were at Kruiseck, to which place I rode early one morning with our Major, to inspect farmhouses, with a view to arranging Field Dressing Stations. Later in the day calling at Head-quarters to inquire if there were any funerals requiring my attention, I found the whole place in extreme excitement; Uhlans were advancing in force. Every hedgerow and wall was lined with our men; the scared inhabitants, utterly unnerved by shell fire, were fleeing from the place. Their appearance was heartrending, and revealed the unutterable horror of war as carried into the midst of a peaceful population.

My ride back to my unit in the gloaming was sufficiently adventurous to please the most reckless man, owing to the proximity of the Uhlans, and gave a zest not often met with to the three or four miles which had to be traversed. Never did I strain my eyes more eagerly, and somewhat after the fashion of Jehu of yore I made my way along the deserted track into a place of comparative safety.

From the neighbourhood of Zandvoorde my unit was hurriedly moved to Gheluvelt, which was then threatened by a German force approaching from the direction of Bercelaire.

Here the whole population was in a state of indescribable anxiety and fear, which it was impossible to remove, for the shells were more convincing than any arguments we could bring to bear.

Our Head-quarters were established at a Xaverian Brotherhood ; the superior of which—a dear old gentleman—did his utmost to ensure our comfort. It was

weary work hanging about all day awaiting results. Towards evening I thought it wise to get a sleep, and so turned in about five o'clock. During these days of constant anxiety, owing to the proximity of the enemy, we seldom or never removed our clothes,—I had not had mine off for over a week at that time —thus we were ready for any emergency, at any time.

From the village of Gheluvelt we moved on a mile nearer to Ypres, where we billeted in the Château de Gheluvelt, from which the owner (Monsieur Peerebone) and his family had evidently departed in great haste. Finely situated in a well wooded park, the house was most splendidly equipped in every respect. The pictures, statuary and furniture were in keeping with the outward appearance of the place. It was interesting to notice the different manner of dealing with other people's property in vogue with the British, in contrast with

the German method; so rigid was our O.C. that not even a vegetable was allowed to be taken from the well-stocked walled garden, close by the mansion; a sentry being placed to prevent any hungry 'Tommy' gratifying his desire in that quarter.

Towards evening a general engagement took place, and there was very heavy shelling. Several shells struck the house, but none of us were injured. On the following morning I was called to an advanced outpost of the Scots Guards, to bury Sergeant Wilson, of Lord Esmé Gordon's Company. On reaching the line I found the Battalion about to advance into action in extended order, and the man had been hurriedly buried. On my way back I joined Captain Hamilton Wedderburn, Adjutant, who had been ordered to the rear suffering from appendicitis. I had met this officer's father, Colonel Hamilton, who resided in my neighbourhood at home.

During the night several wounded men came in, and the large salon presented a weird appearance as the doctors attended the suffering men. No cooking was allowed, and all windows were carefully curtained, in order not to draw the fire of the enemy, who were in very unpleasant proximity to the house. I well remember next morning, because the Germans had got the range to a nicety, and the otherwise enjoyable place was rendered unbearable by the crash of shells. So unhealthy grew the position, that the transport was moved a mile away; but we who composed the tent section remained to deal with any men who were brought in. It is astonishing how quickly one grows accustomed to 'fire,' and a very short experience enabled us to go about our work, under risky circumstances, in the most ordinary manner.

The nights at this time were very dark, and at several points we could see burning farm homesteads and villages, which to

the thoughtful mind denoted the awful destruction and suffering envolved by the ghastly outrage upon humanity, being perpetrated by the enemy.

We left the château very suddenly, owing to heavy shelling. Some of our men were hit, and two of our 'mess' had horses killed under them, but otherwise we managed to get clear from a decidedly dangerous position. That night it was pitch dark, and we halted on the roadside, some two or three miles west of Gheluvelt. It was pouring with rain as we ate our meal of cold rations; we could not even enjoy a comforting smoke, as the lighting of a match would have been certain to draw the fire of our vigilant foe. Mr. Jaffray and I both agreed that a night's lodging in a damp ditch was hardly consonant with our wishes, and therefore we set out for the hamlet of Halte, where the railway crosses the road, in hopes that we might find cover of some sort.

Leading our horses very cautiously along the road, for sentinels were posted in every direction, and at such 'nervy' times men frequently fire before they challenge, we made our way to a small estaminet which we found crammed with French soldiers. I pleaded hard for even a chair, but the proprietor assured me of the impossibility of offering even this very slender hospitality. I was fortunate to meet MacKenzie, the Transport officer of the Scots Guards, who introduced me to a French officer, who in turn interested the landlady's daughter in our forlorn condition. This kind angel of mercy informed me that her married sister lived at a farm near by, and she thought that there was a bedroom that Mr. Jaffray and I might make use of. Accordingly, holding my reins in one hand and my fair guide's hand in the other, I was led through pitch darkness for some distance, and presently found myself in a huge Belgian farm kitchen,

crammed with French soldiers and smelling horribly of garlic. Yes! the farmer could let us have his bedroom for the night, at a small remuneration, as he and his wife had decided to stay up; accordingly, we were shown into an exceedingly small room, some eight feet square, in which was a bed the covering of which made one shudder to look at; but any port in a storm; and we accordingly doubled up the best way we could on a bed some two feet too short for us. As we vainly tried to fall asleep, my batman suddenly turned up,—how he found our quarters will always be a mystery to me—with the news that the column had moved off to some place which he could not pronounce. I showed him my map and asked him if he recognized any name in the locality, but finding that he was as much at sea as to the destination of the unit as I was, I determined that it was useless to attempt to explore that part of Belgium

in the darkness of a soaking night; so stowing my servant away in the corner of the kitchen, we did our best to get a few hours' sleep. In the first grey of the dawn we arose and ate a little black bread and very salt bacon, washed down with some execrable coffee, then leading our horses out of the cowhouse in which we had installed them the night before, and from which we had had to turn out a couple of very evil-smelling beasts, we sallied forth to the apparently hopeless task of discovering the direction in which the column had moved. One's deductive faculty had to be drawn upon largely. Presently we found ourselves at Zillebeke, where we were held up by the Northumberland Hussars, who came by in splendid order on their way to entering action. Standing by my side was a Staff officer who had dismounted from his car, awaiting the passage of the cavalry. I explained to him our difficulty, and he said that he rather

thought our unit was with the 10th Hussars at Zandvoorde, some four miles away, and very kindly offered me a lift. My horse had contracted a terrible cold and was hardly fit to ride, so placing him in charge of my batman, I arranged to drive on in the car, leaving Mr. Jaffray and my servant to follow. The friendly officer turned out to be Lord Nairne, who was, unfortunately, killed a few days afterwards.

On reaching the village of Zandvoorde, I encountered a terrible sight. The enemy was approaching from two sides, and shelling hard. The place was a slaughter-house; never have I seen so ghastly a sight. The doctors, with their coats off and shirt sleeves rolled up, looked more like butchers than medical men, and for an hour or two I found my hands full in the saddest of all work, dealing with dying men.

As I was eating a hasty breakfast—for in campaigning one learns the value of

sleeping and eating whenever a chance presents itself—the O.C. came to me saying that some one must get through to Ypres, to stop the transport that was about to come out, and also to warn the major of the serious condition of affairs at Zandvoorde. Would I go? Such an opportunity of doing 'a real bit' only comes now and again, therefore it was not difficult to decide.

I had a foretaste of what I was presently to pass through, as, sitting on the doorstep of a cottage, I was changing into riding boots, out of the heavy Swiss climbing boots that I had been wearing, and which threatened to be awkward in the stirrups, if by any chance I was thrown, a not unlikely event under fire, when a shrapnel burst some twenty feet from me, with an explosion which almost lifted me from the ground. The door before which I sat, and the front of the cottage, were liberally studded with bullets and pieces of the casing,

but in a most providential manner I was untouched. Very quickly I completed my change of boots, and got my kit-bag once more stowed away in a transport wagon. Strictest orders had been given that no kits were to be removed from the wagon, and I hope that the O.C., if ever he discovers my delinquency, will take into consideration the urgency of my desire to fulfil instructions in the carrying of his orders into Ypres.

For three miles, right over 'Hill 60,' I had the ride of my life. Shells were bursting in every direction, but my good horse struggled on gamely. By this time he had come to know the import of the shrieking whistle which betokens the approach of a shell, but he displayed no more concern than a momentary quiver as it burst. As for me I could only place myself in God's hands, and well remember how, as each shell approached, I repeated that comforting

word from Isaiah xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Over and over again I repeated 'because he trusteth in thee.' And then bang! bang! and once more the danger was past.

The road was crowded with terrified people, literally fleeing for their lives, and as I got out of the range of fire, I tried to comfort them in the best way I could.

Reaching Ypres I delivered my message, and then sank down and fell into a deep sleep for four hours. I suppose it was a kind of reaction from the nervous strain.

I found Ypres crammed with wounded men, and worked hard there for the next day or two. Many were the distressing cases that came under my attention.

It was on October 23 that I received my first batch of letters from home, and the first opportunity I stole away

into a quiet corner and enjoyed myself to my heart's content.

Those were wonderful days, in which all sorts and conditions of men, from officers of the Household Troops downwards, passed through my hands. Of course there were many funerals to conduct, and in connexion with the funeral arrangements and the system of tabulating I came much into contact with Major the Hon. —. Collins, one of the most charming and courteous of men.

On October 31—that fateful day, when it seemed impossible for the thin line of khaki to further withstand the tremendous onslaught of the enemy which had placed the Prussian Guard in its front line—the sad duty of burying young Prince Maurice of Battenburg fell to my lot. It was a strange coincidence, for I had met him in bygone years when he was a bright, attractive boy. Such a task awakened the greatest interest in

my heart, for sad as the ceremony was, I keenly felt the privilege of rendering this last act of tender duty to a young prince so universally beloved. One of his men, in relating the manner of his heroic death, afterwards said to me, 'I loved him, sir, as a brother.' The funeral, which was attended by Prince Arthur of Connaught and several Generals, took place under heavy fire. So continuous indeed was the roar of the shells, that an officer, writing to the papers some time after, related that it was impossible to distinguish the chaplain's voice. The service was therefore necessarily brief, and at its conclusion the crowd of officers quickly dispersed.

An order had been issued for a withdrawal from the Front, and the Menin road into Ypres was blocked with troops and transport.

A short time previous to this I had the misfortune to be somewhat seriously

injured, for my horse—frightened or struck by a shell which burst near by, I have never been able to determine which,—fell heavily on me, severely crushing my left leg. I had been taken in a Staff car to the 6th casualty clearing station and attended to, but the injured limb grew steadily worse. In the course of the afternoon, to my great joy, the 23rd Field Ambulance passed me on its way from Hooge, and I was promptly placed on an ambulance wagon, on which I trekked through Ypres; until we reached Dickebusch, some three miles on the south of the city.

As we halted for a time at the square at Ypres, a young officer, seeing me in the ambulance, came up with a cheery 'Hallo, padré! what's up? Last time I saw you was in your pulpit at St. John's, Boscombe; life's a funny game, isn't it?'

Such interviews are of frequent occurrence at the Front, where lives moment-

arily touch, and then, possibly, for ever separate.

Lying on a stone floor of a deserted cottage in Dickebusch that night, I passed one of the most painful, wretched and sleepless nights of my life. My brother officers were all snoring comfortably, when suddenly a knock at the door placed me on the alert. My first thought was that the Germans had got through, accordingly I made no reply; presently a gruff voice said, 'An orderly, sir,' and I cried out, 'Come in.' He had brought a dispatch to say that the whole German line had been forced back, and that the Ambulance was immediately to take up its old position on the farther side of Hooge.

In a very short time an early breakfast was quickly disposed of and the column was ready to move off.

The O.C., finding me utterly incapacitated by reason of my injuries, decided that I must go into hospital, for wounded

men are not much use in a life where a man's fullest powers are daily called for.

Fortunately, at that moment, Colonel Swan, A.D.M.S., and Lieut.-Colonel Guy Moores, D.A.D.M.S., came up in their car, and learning my condition, very kindly brought me and my kit into Ypres; saying that I must proceed to the Base.

Accordingly I was deposited at Ypres station, where the R.T.O. most kindly had me cared for in his office.

During the long hours of Sunday, November 1, I spent a miserable time waiting for the hospital train to start. In the course of the day, an officer in my Brigade, Lord Bury, had a chat with me, and committed to me an urgent telegram for his wife. In the course of the morning he had been arrested as a spy; and seemed very amused at the uncommon experience. At 6 p.m. I was placed on the train, and with some

two or three other fellow sufferers, gradually rolled away from the sound of fire, which for three weeks past had been the daily accompaniment of one's life.

I cannot speak too highly of the great care and solicitude bestowed upon the wounded in the train. For the first time one came into touch with those splendid women, literally angels of mercy, the nursing sisters. Never shall I cease to remember their loving care, and the skilful way in which they bandaged up my crushed leg.

It was a long journey. Leaving Ypres at 6 p.m. on Sunday night, we didn't reach Boulogne until 3 p.m. on the Monday afternoon, a distance of not more than eighty miles.

On reaching the Base I was informed that I was to be sent to England, on a hospital ship about to leave. Accordingly, with some twenty or thirty other officers, and a large number of men, we were conveyed to the ambulance, through

a dense crowd of sympathizing French people.

I have certainly never seen such a collection of scarecrows as we presented to the public gaze; and in much pain though we were, we could not help being struck with the ludicrousness of our condition. Bespattered with mud; filthy in appearance; beards of several days' growth; legs of trousers, and sleeves of coats cut away; bandaged and bloody; we must have presented a truly remarkable sight.

On the hospital ship, the *Carisbroke Castle*, the arrangements were perfect. It was almost worth being injured to lie in such a comfortable bed; and the food was beyond description of delight.

On board, every case was speedily dealt with by medical men, and everything done to ensure the comfort of the sufferers.

Whilst the life at the Front is exceed-

ingly rigorous and claims the utmost of one's strength, and the word and act of sympathy does not come much to the surface of men's lives, yet, when once a man is bowled over, a careful country certainly does its best to alleviate his suffering.

On reaching Southampton the following morning, finding that I lived in the area of a military hospital (The Royal Victoria and West Hants), of which I have been chaplain for many years, the senior officer, as a great concession, very kindly allowed me to be sent home.

Home! Do those who always live in the blessed shelter of this sweet spot, really know the fulness and sweetness of 'home.' Truly the English classic song, 'Home, sweet Home, there is no place like Home,' comes with a new, full, deep meaning to men who have passed through the ordeal of fire.

Bed claimed my presence for many a weary day, and it was March 16 before

a Medical Board permitted me to resume my duties with the British Expeditionary Force. My further experience of service must be related in the subsequent chapter on 'Life at the Base.'

THE WELCOME OF A PEOPLE

CHAPTER III

THE WELCOME OF A PEOPLE

THERE was no mistaking the enthusiastic welcome accorded to the Seventh Division, as it moved south through the well cultivated country, thriving villages, and prosperous towns of Belgium.

Already the deeds of German 'kultur' had reached the ears of the inhabitants; indeed, many of those who had fled from the barbarous enemy bore signs of the gross ill-treatment inflicted by the 'kultured' foe, in furtherance of the advice of General Bernhardi and others to carry 'terror' into the hearts of the invaded people. And nearly all of them had some dread story to relate, of wanton destruction to public and private pro-

perty, and of vile wrongs perpetrated upon an unoffending people. Small wonder that they welcomed us; for Great Britain meant more to them than the name of a powerful nation; it rather conveyed the idea of the strong, active principles of liberty and justice, which they felt were about to be set free in their unhappy country.

In contradistinction to the Germans, this people of a small country seemed to unconsciously uphold the marked differentiation between the laws of might and right, as exhibited by the two nationalities, Germany and Belgium.

Germany, the former land of light and learning, has gradually slipped downwards from her high ideals. A sure and sad process of religious and moral declension has ensued; until, under the baneful influences of Nietzsche, Treitschke, Bernhardi, and their like, the land of the reformation has become the land of militarism, employing forces without

justice, discipline without pity, and annexation without consideration.

All this lies at the back of the mind of the best part of Europe to-day, and more especially of Belgium.

Belgium is a Christian country. The religious houses have the words of Scripture prominently inscribed upon them. On one house of a Religious Order I saw painted, 'All for God.' On the cross roads there is frequently found a life-size crucifix, which points its wondrous teaching to many a weary soul.

A valued friend of mine,—an officer in a kilted regiment—writing home a short time ago described his sensations, as, emerging from the bloody ruck of his first engagement, he presently found himself, worn and spent, gazing at the figure of the Crucified One. And as he very beautifully said, 'Jesus came afresh into my heart.'

Again, one has not to travel far along any main road without encountering a

small shrine, open day and night, for those who desire to draw aside from the ordinary pursuits of strenuous life, and enjoy prayer to God; and that almost lost art, meditation.

Thus we see a striking contrast between the conquerors and the conquered, exhibited in the ruthless invasion to which Belgium has been subjected. Roman Catholics as they are, the Belgians whom I met—and I conversed with many—seemed to realize that England, Protestant England, is honestly striving to exhibit 'the righteousness that alone exalteth the nation.'

It was in a state of the deepest gratitude, based upon such principles as I have set forth, that the people flocked to receive us. True, at times they revealed their feelings in very unorthodox fashion. For example, I remember at a midday halt one day, while the men stood preparatory to breaking off, an ecstatic Belgian girl rushed up to a

'Tommy,' and flinging her arms round his neck, kissed him warmly. I have no doubt that on occasion the man could have returned the salute with interest, but the suddenness and the publicity of the attack rendered him both speechless and powerless. There he stood blushing like a school girl; the while his comrades urged him to retaliate. He bore himself like a martyr; but when a man immediately afterwards proceeded to kiss him on both cheeks,—as foreigners often do —then 'Tommy' recovered his mental equilibrium; and his language, well! it was more forcible than elegant.

A far more pathetic welcome fell to my lot, as I walked across the square at Ypres, in the early days of the British occupancy. While talking to a brother officer, I suddenly felt my hand seized, kissed, and then stroked; and looking down, I saw a sweet little blue-eyed maid of some five years, not much above the level of the bottom of my tunic in

height, who said in the prettiest broken English, 'Brave Ingleese.' The memory of a certain other blue-eyed kiddy, away in England, was too much for me, and this time *I* was the aggressor, for I took the little maid up in my arms and kissed her, much to the amusement of the passers-by I have no doubt.

Nothing seemed too good for the people to offer us. In our billets, indeed, the very best the house could produce was set before us.

As we marched through one town—I think it was Wynghene, which was evidently the centre of the tobacco industry, for tobacco is largely grown in that part of Belgium—thousands of cigars were handed to the column, and for days after the men would not look at the humble 'fag.' In country districts, too, the people were not to be outdone, for strapping farm wenches and men lined the road and literally showered apples and pears upon us.

At the gates of one fine park, the owner, his wife and servants bestowed cigarettes, matches and other acceptable gifts upon the men as they marched past. Oh, yes! those were brave days, and made us feel considerably pleased with ourselves, but do not grudge us such joys, for just below the horizon of that time dark clouds were fast rising, which soon darkened the skies of many and many a life. Anyhow, I will undertake to say that none who were on that trek will ever forget the enthusiasm of the people, as day by day we marched on to do battle for them, and the great principles which surely have made our nation great.

A CHAPTER OF INCIDENTS

CHAPTER IV

A CHAPTER OF INCIDENTS

LIFE at the Front cannot fail to be full of stirring incidents; indeed, I very much question whether any experience comes up to it for interest and excitement. I am not speaking of the ding-dong trench warfare which has characterized the campaign on the Western front for so many months past, but refer more particularly to those early days when both armies were exceedingly active; and the operations very much resembled a game of chess, with not too long an interval between the moves.

In the early days of the war in Flanders, the times were wondrously stirring; one never knew where an attack would be

launched, and what would happen next. With such huge and mobile opposing forces in front of us, every day had some fresh surprise in store. 'From early morning till dewy eve' we lived on the tiptoe of expectation; for, indeed, the early morning carried its message, but generally of discomfort, for not the least discomfort of a campaign is the very early hour at which réveillé is sounded, usually at five, but sometimes at four; or, in the case of emergency, at any hour of the night. But generally it comes just as the attitude necessary to comfort has been discovered, and the somnolent individual is ready for the luxury of what I may call a half and half snooze. It is at that moment, in that mysterious borderland of sleeping and waking, that the strident and compelling sound of the bugle falls upon the unwilling ear. There is no turning over for another spell. One comfort is, there is always very little toilet to per-

form; and in a few minutes the place is alive with dishevelled and half-awake men. Where water can be easily procured, cleanliness is the order of the day; and with all our faults, one essential feature stands to the credit of the British soldier: he *is* a clean man. Never does Tommy miss his wash and shave if there is half a chance of gratifying this admirable instinct.

All visitors to the Front are struck with the glorious health and fitness of our lads. In fact, I have never seen such a collection of healthy manhood in my life. This is attributable in the first place to the natural open-air life which the men lead, but in the next place to the excellent sanitary arrangements and precautions adopted and insisted upon by the authorities, which very largely account for the remarkable immunity from disease enjoyed by the troops.

Behind all this, comes the most important question of 'grub.' The commissariat

of the British Expeditionary Force is a marvel of organization. During the last six months of my military service I enjoyed the advantage of travelling up and down the lines from Ypres to Bethune, and everywhere I was most profoundly impressed by the marvel of supply. Scattered over the whole front are units, large and small, each of which has to be fed daily; and woe to the unlucky A.S.C. officer who is responsible for delay in forwarding or conveying rations. 'Tommy' is nothing without a good 'grouse,' but in this respect he is not always logical; bread which is stale will give him cause to grumble for hours; but he will rush into the most desperate and bloody work, and suffer untold misery, without a murmur.

Alluding to the masterpiece of organization, which enables our army to be fed while in the battle front, Mr. Philip Gibbs, writing in the *Daily Chronicle*, says: 'The British soldier has at least

this in his favour, in spite of all the horrors of war which has put his manhood to the test, he gets his "grub" with unfailing regularity, if there is any possible means of approach to him, and he gets enough and a bit more. It is impossible for him to "grouse" about that element of his life on the field. The French soldier envies him and says, —as I have heard one of them say—"Ma foi! our comrades feed like princes! they have even jam with their tea! The smell of bacon comes from their trenches and touches our nostrils with the most excellent fragrance, more beautiful than the perfume of flowers. The English eat as well as they fight, which is furiously."'

It may interest my readers to see what a man's daily ration consists of. This table refers to officers and men alike, for there is no difference in this respect:—

1¼ lb. fresh meat, *or*, 1 lb. preserved meat;
1¼ lb. bread;
4 oz. bacon;
3 oz. cheese;
4 oz. jam;
3 oz. sugar;
½ lb. fresh vegetables, *or*, 2 oz. dried;
⅝ oz. tea, coffee, *or* cocoa;
2 oz. tobacco per week, *or* 50 cigarettes.

This ration is more scientifically arranged than its recipient imagines; as a matter of fact, it comprises all the essentials which go to build up the stamina of the fighting man; and thus, well provided with fresh air, good food, to say nothing of hard exercise, the animal side of Mr. Thomas Atkins is kept in the pink of condition, and he is able to face the burdens of life which are incidental to his calling, and which are not a few, with remarkable ease and success.

Life at the Front is a strange compound of the grave and the gay. One of the most appealing features is witnessed in the sad lot of the Belgian refugees, who, often at a moment's notice, have fled from their homes, leaving all their property to the devastation of war. I have frequently seen mournful processions on the road, consisting of old and young. It is heartrending to witness the pitiable look of an aged couple, who through a long life have lived in some happy homestead, taking their last gaze at the house with its trim garden, which one knows in a few hours will be shattered past recognition; women, sometimes in a most delicate condition, struggling bravely on; children crying; and the men with set teeth and despairing faces striding on, carrying the few articles which they have hurriedly snatched up, as the whole family has escaped from the hell which has so suddenly befallen them. Where are they to go to? God

only knows what becomes of them. I have seen them lining the road on a pouring wet night, outside a town already full to overflowing with like unhappy sufferers; the while Belgian soldiers, with fixed bayonets, have prohibited any further entrance to that which promised a lodging place. Soldiers are not proverbially given to overmuch sensitiveness where human suffering is concerned, for a daily intercourse with terrible scenes cannot fail to harden a man, but I declare that I have seen strong men burst into tears as they have gazed at one of these processions of great mental and bodily agony.

One serious aspect of life at the Front is found in the remarkable system of espionage which unfortunately abounds. One lives in a constant state of suspicion, for in this respect the enemy is as daring as he is resourceful.

The first time I passed through Hooge we suddenly saw a homing pigeon let

out of the loft of a cottage ; immediately the house was surrounded and entered. I speedily made for the back of the premises, hoping to intercept any one who had been responsible for a most suspicious act. A boy of some eighteen years was discovered in the loft, with a large number of carrier pigeons, which were immediately confiscated, and the boy was arrested. I rode off to Head-quarters, some mile and a half away, and reported the occurrence, with the result that the boy was marched off for close examination. The pigeons, however, formed a very agreeable addition to the men's menu that night. I believe the boy was released ; but whilst he was under arrest, a very personable and well-dressed individual approached, and introduced himself as Count ——, stating that he had known the boy for years, and that the keeping of pigeons formed his hobby. Something in the manner of the man aroused our suspicion, and

after careful examination it was found that he himself was a spy; and in due course he was shot.

Another somewhat remarkable instance of the ramifications of this aspect of warfare occurred in a certain well-known town; one of the high officials of which—whom I knew well—a most courteous gentleman—proved to be in close touch with the enemy. He, too, was shot. Daily there are men, and sometimes women, who risk their lives in securing items of information as to the disposition of troops, guns, etc., which are likely to prove of value to the enemy. Notwithstanding the strictest orders, I am afraid our men are not always wise in their intercourse with strangers. On one occasion, very stringent orders from Head-quarters had been read out to the men, prior to moving off in the early morning, informing them that on no account were they to disclose any information whatsoever as to the

movements or disposition of troops; and yet, during a ten minutes' halt later in the day, as I rode by a transport wagon, I heard the driver gassing on with refreshing innocence, as he retailed to a civilian where we had come from; where we were going to; where our Brigade was situated, etc. I am afraid I raised my voice in hot anger, and riding round to the other side of the wagon was just in time to see the eager listener disappearing across country. It was impossible to arrest him, and the incident closed; not altogether to the satisfaction of the thoughtless purveyor of news I imagine.

Amid men so full of such animal life as our brave lads, it will be readily imagined that existence is not wholly composed of shadow; indeed, few careers are so full of brightness and geniality as those of our fighting men. 'Tommy Atkins' is a unique creation. I know not from whence he springs. There is

something in his environment which evolves him, I suppose; it is not a question of years of association with men of his like, for the New Army which has only been in being for a few months produces precisely the same type; and men whom this time last year were far removed from the very thought of soldiering, are now found to possess all the attributes and qualities—good, bad and indifferent—which formed the traditional soldier in the ranks. His cheeriness is unbounded. For some time the pronunciation of Ypres bothered him seriously, but he soon settled the difficulty by calling it 'Wypers.' Étaples was also another stumbling block, but 'Eatables' soon revealed Tommy's way out of another difficulty. Ploegstreete, which for centuries has been an insignificant hamlet, is now known throughout the British Army as 'Plug Street'; well known for possessing some of the finest trenches along the line.

One afternoon I had ridden back into Ypres to purchase a note-book, and had procured what I wanted, when two privates who stood by my side in the little stationer's shop determined on the purchase of some small article; the difficulty at the moment was to find out its cost. One of them, who acted as spokesman, held up his selection, and astonished the woman at the other side of the counter by saying, 'How mooch monnee?' Naturally enough the woman gazed at him with a bewildered air, when 'Tommy' turned to the pal by his side and said, 'Silly swine, they don't know their own language.'

A remarkable feature which I frequently encountered in connexion with what I may call the soldier's social life, is the great facility with which he introduces himself to the native inhabitants. In a very few minutes he seems to be thoroughly at home with them, girls and all, and is in some mysterious way

holding conversation, or at all events conveying his meaning, to the satisfaction of both parties. In the gloaming you will see him strolling about with the girls of the village, as much at home as in the lanes of his own countryside. What they talk about I can't tell, but talk they do; and as far as one can determine, to their mutual pleasure.

Even in the deadliest moments, the wit of the man is to the front. At the battle of Neuve Chapelle, at the beginning of March, a bomb-thrower, rushing through the village, came upon a cellar full of Germans in hiding. Putting his head in at the door, at the risk of his life he cried: 'How many of yer are there in there?' The answer came, 'Ve vos twelve.' Then said Tommy, throwing in a bomb, 'Divide that amongst yer,' with the result too ghastly for words.

Such humour, coarse though it may be, is not by any means confined to

terra firma. On the first of April, a British aeroplane sailed over the German lines, and when over the first line of trenches, dropped a football. The Huns were simply terrified, as they saw this new kind of bomb slowly descending, and fled right and left. With amazement they saw it strike the ground, and then bounce high up, until it gradually settled down; then very cautiously the bolder elements amongst them crept up and found a football, on which was written, 'The first of April, you blighters.'

It is strange to see this remarkable spirit evinced in the most hazardous moments of life. Right out in front of the trenches one night a man was badly hit, and his chum, at the risk of his life, rushed out to his help, saying, 'Get on my back, mate, and I will carry you in,' only to be met with, 'Not darned likely; I shall be shot in the back, and you will get the V.C.'

A further illustration of this most

remarkable military production occurs in the following incident. A friend of mine, who has himself been twice wounded, on the last occasion of injury was in the trenches, when suddenly a man by his side was hit in the wrist; clapping his hand upon the wound he exclaimed, 'Got it! I've been waiting for this since last August.' Then, putting his left hand into his pocket, he pulled out a mouth-organ and played 'Home, Sweet Home.' Who but an English 'Tommy' could, or would, do that. No wonder that the French are puzzled by this strange composition of humanity with which they are fighting as allies.

The enemy, too, wonders, as he comes across a foe so remarkable in his words and methods. A German officer—a most charming man—lying in the next bed but one to me, on the hospital ship which brought me home from France, was asked what he thought of the comparative fighting values of the allies,

and he remarked, 'Well! we can manage the Belgians, and we understand the French, but we cannot comprehend you English, for by every known law of war you are beaten again and again, but you never seem to know it!' This is, of course, not an original utterance, but derived from one of Napoleon's great Generals; but at all events it shows the estimate placed upon our fighting capacity by an enemy who at one time styled us as 'that contemptible little army.' There is sometimes a weird sense of disproportion revealed, as in the case of a Highlander who was visited by a brother chaplain at a Base hospital some two or three months ago, and who remarked to the patient, 'Well, Jock, what do you think of Jack Johnsons? They put the fear of God into your heart, don't they?' 'Aye, sir, they do, but let's hope it will soon wear off.'

My readers will see that we are a strange compound of grave and gay at

the Front, as I have already said. There is, however, a deeper side of the soldier's life, which after all is even more correctly characteristic of the man than that which only appears upon the surface.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES

UNTIL October, 1914, Ypres was generally regarded as a quiet Belgian town, celebrated for its most interesting and valuable buildings, and relics of a past age; but owing to its strategic importance in this war, it has from that time onwards been lifted out of its somnolent life into a world-wide importance, as one of the greatest battle-fields of the world.

In explaining the great part which the Seventh Division took in this front-rank battle, I cannot do better than quote from *The Times* of December 16, 1914, in describing the heroic effort of our troops in resisting the furious onslaughts of the Germans in their vain

endeavour to reach Calais; to which point the Kaiser had commanded a road 'to be forced at all costs.' Under the heading—

THE DEFENCE OF YPRES
BRILLIANT WORK OF THE SEVENTH DIVISION
STUBBORN VALOUR AND ENDURANCE

the writer proceeds to say:—

> 'The full story of the gallantry shown by British troops in their stubborn defence of Ypres has yet to be told, but the orders which we publish below, with the detailed official narrative of events in Flanders which accompanies them, give some indication of the fine work which has been done by the Seventh Infantry and Third Cavalry Divisions.
>
> The following order, which accompanied an order issued by General Sir Douglas Haig, published in *The Times* of November 30, was issued

to the Seventh Division by Lieut.-General Sir H. S. Rawlinson :—

In forwarding the attached order by G.O.C. First Corps, I desire to place on record my own high appreciation of the endurance and fine soldierly qualities exhibited by all ranks of the Seventh Division from the time of their landing in Belgium. You have been called to take a conspicuous part in one of the severest struggles in the history of the war, and you have had the honour and distinction of contributing in no small measure to the success of our arms and the defeat of the enemy's plans.

The task which fell to your share inevitably involved heavy losses, but you have at any rate the satisfaction of knowing that the losses you have inflicted upon the enemy have been far heavier.

The Seventh Division have gained for themselves a reputation for stubborn valour and endurance in defence, and I am certain that you will only add to your laurels when the opportunity of advancing to the attack is given you.

Such Army orders are necessarily written in general terms, and are invariably marked by a disciplined self-restraint. It may be of interest, therefore, to give some account of the circumstances in which "the stubborn valour and endurance" of which Sir Henry Rawlinson speaks were displayed. The work of the Seventh Division and the Third Cavalry Division to the date of the issue of this order at about the end of November, was of a kind which strains the mental and physical strength of troops, beyond any other form of operations. The two Divi-

sions were sent to the aid of the Naval Division at Antwerp, and they were landed at Ostend and Zeebrugge about October 6. They occupied the regions of Bruges and Ghent, and they had to suffer the initial disappointment of finding that they arrived too late. Two days later Sir Henry Rawlinson moved his Head-quarters from Bruges to Ostend. The enemy were advancing in great force, and the position of our troops became untenable; indeed, the situation was so serious that the troops which had been detailed for lines of communication at the base were forced to embark again and return to Dunkirk.

A POSITION OF GRAVE DANGER

The position of the two Divisions from this point onwards was one of grave danger. They were forced by the overwhelming superiority in

numbers of the enemy to retire. From Ghent all the way to Ypres it was a desperate rearguard fight. They had to trek across a difficult country without any lines of communication and without a base, holding on doggedly from position to position, notably at Thielt and Roulers, until they took up their final stand before Ypres. What that stand has meant to England will one day be recognized. What it cost these troops, and how they fought, will be recorded in the proudest annals of their regiments.

After the deprivations and the tension of being pursued through day and night by an infinitely stronger force, these two Divisions had yet to pass through the worst ordeal of all. It was left to a little force of 30,000 to keep the German Army at bay for some days while the other British Corps were being

brought up from the Aisne (the First Corps did not come to their assistance till October 21). Here they hung on like grim death, with almost every man in the trenches holding a line which was of necessity a great deal too long—a thin, exhausted line against which the prime of the German first line troops were hurling themselves with fury. The odds against them were about eight to one, and when once the enemy found the range of a trench, the shells dropped into it from one end to the other with the most terrible effect. Yet the men stood firm and defended Ypres in such a manner that a German officer afterwards described their action as a brilliant feat of arms, and said that they were under the impression that there had been four British Corps against them at this point.

When the two Divisions were

> afterwards withdrawn from the firing line to refit, it was found that in the Infantry alone, out of the 400 officers who set out from England, there were only forty-four left, and out of 12,000 men only 2,336. So far, little has been published about the work of these Divisions—probably because the bulk of the various dispatches is so great. It may be well, therefore, to place on record now an achievement which will one day be reckoned, no doubt, among the finest of the kind in British military history.'

One's own view and conception of so huge a movement was necessarily small, for in a 'far-flung battle line' the ordinary individual could only see very little of the main operations. Yet the little I saw revealed to me the splendid heroism of our men, and the carefully thought out disposition of our troops; a heroism

so perfect that one attenuated line of khaki, consisting of under 30,000 men, held 240,000 Germans at bay. For a week this small force clung to their positions by dint of magnificent fighting and dauntless pluck, until the main army from the Aisne under General Sir John French joined forces with them.

During these stirring and most eventful days the scenes of ordinary life often came before me in striking contrast to what was being thus enacted in the very forefront of England's effort. For instance, sometimes amid a very hell of noise and carnage, the thought of Regent Street or Cheapside in their work-a-day aspect, or again, the peaceful surroundings of 'home, sweet home,' would find a momentary lodgment in my mind, only to be dispelled by the sounds and signs which betokened that the sternest game of life was being played before my eyes. Each hour seemed to promise the break of our lines by the vast masses of

the enemy, which were always pressing us hard, and indeed the promise would have been fulfilled but for the grit of men who never acknowledged defeat.

I have always been proud of being a Briton, but seeing what I did, and knowing what I know, I feel immeasurably prouder now, than ever before, of belonging to a nation which can produce such men. Even nature presented its remarkable contrast to the clamour of war, for in the interlude of the firing of a battery of eighteen pounders I have heard the birds singing as peacefully and merrily as in quiet English fields.

It is difficult to convey to my readers the prodigies of valour which daily took place in the course of the great struggle in front of Ypres. One dark night a young R.A.M.C. officer, who until quite recently had been pursuing his quiet round of work as a medical practitioner in England, but who at the call of country had pressed to the front, was

out with his bearer company attending the dying and wounded men, when suddenly a Battalion, which had lost all its officers, momentarily broke from the trenches. Quickly gathering the dread import of their act, this young hero rushed into the ruck of men, who amid that awful hell had been seized with panic. Calling to a sergeant he directed him to shoot the first man that came by, then rushing into the disorganized rabble—for it was little else at that time—he shouted to them, 'Men! men! have you forgotten that you are Englishmen,' and quickly bringing them into order headed them back again to their grim work. I have been pleased to see that this brave lad has received a well merited distinction from his Sovereign, but at the time the only comment made upon his behaviour by his O.C. was, 'The young beggar ought to get a rap over his knuckles for exceeding his duty.' Such feats are constantly occur-

ring, so often indeed as to hardly excite comment.

Two officers from a Guards Battalion in my Brigade died the death of heroes in the dark hours of one early morning, endeavouring to fulfil the hopeless task of capturing a German gun, the while they had only six men with them. The whole party was blown to pieces in the endeavour. Some may think it a useless waste of valuable life; in degree it is, but these daring deeds go far to preserve that glorious spirit of heroic venture which characterizes the whole fighting line of our men. The value of systematic training, which at the time it is being undergone is often regarded as a weariness of the flesh by the men undergoing it, is strikingly exhibited in actual warfare. I was much struck with this late one afternoon, as I saw the 2nd Gordons enter action in extended order. Their 'dressing and distance' was most admirably preserved, the while they took

advantage of every inch of cover that presented itself. It was indeed a thrilling sight to see these brave lads advancing under a murderous fire, with as great a steadiness as if they were in the Long Valley at Aldershot.

Moving about near the firing line requires considerable circumspection, and a fairly accurate knowledge of the disposition of troops. For lack of this, I once found myself in a most unenviable position. I had been called to bury an officer of the Guards, who had died under circumstances of singular gallantry —alas! leaving a wife and two charming children. On nearing the spot where I had been told the body was lying, I was informed that it had been arranged to convey the remains to England. There was nothing for it but to retrace one's steps, but by this time the firing which had been unpleasantly heavy on the way out, had waxed in intensity, when suddenly emerging from the shelter

of a wood, I found myself between the two lines of opposing forces. A British sergeant roared lustily to me to stay where I was and lie down, and I never obeyed instruction with greater alacrity. Fortunately for me, the line of battle steadily shifted and I was enabled to ride onwards with some degree of security; but I inwardly registered a vow that in the future I would make sure of what was taking place before I rode into such a mare's nest.

The methods of warfare, as now conducted, are entirely removed from those of previous campaigns; for instance, the ranging of guns to-day is most correctly determined by aeroplanes. But not only do these war scouts render this important service; from the air they are enabled to detect the disposition of troops, gun emplacements, and all other movements of the enemy, which heretofore it has been difficult to determine.

Very frequently most thrilling duels

take place between opposing aviators, and certainly nothing is more exciting than to watch such a struggle in mid air. One is lost in wonderment at the pluck and the skill of the aviators, as one sees them manœuvring for place, the while subject to heavy fire. One of the most notable aviators at that time was Commander Samson, commonly known as Captain Kettle, owing to a likeness to that far-famed character of fiction, which was to be faintly traced in the hero of real life. Commander Samson was not only a 'flyer' possessed of intrepid courage and great skill, but he further possessed an armour-plated car, in which was a high velocity gun; this he manipulated in a manner which struck terror to the German's heart; and one was not surprised to hear that the Kaiser had offered a reward of four thousand marks to the man who brought him down, or put him out of action. I enjoyed a marked illustration of his

prowess one afternoon, near Hooge. A German aeroplane was sailing majestically over our lines, the observer no doubt making notes of everything which he beheld, when suddenly Samson dashed up in his car, and after very deliberate aim, hit the aircraft in the oil tank, which resulted in the whole falling to the ground a burning and crumpled mass. Such episodes appeal to the sporting nature which characterizes most men, and tend to relieve any monotony which may at times threaten to settle upon the men.

From boyhood one has delighted in reading the vivid accounts of such campaigns as the Peninsular, or Crimea; and in later days in taking part in the autumn manœuvres held in such open country as Dartmoor, or Salisbury Plain. One well remembers the fascination of watching a General, surrounded by his Staff, sending orders and receiving dispatches at the hands of his 'gallopers.'

But all this has changed. No longer do we see cocked hat Generals, on the summit of rising ground, spying the position of troops through his field-glasses. To-day some of the most notable actions are fought by a General who the whole time may be three or four miles away from the seat of the struggle. Picture him, pipe in mouth, working out the movements of the troops on a large map in front of him. Every moment the Field telephone is at work; dispatch riders breathlessly deliver their messages, the while the Staff are carefully noting every fresh movement reported. Not an unnecessary word is spoken, and all hinges upon one figure whose whole attention is centred, by the aid of his vivid imagination and definite information, upon a battlefield, the ground of which he probably knows, but which at the moment is far out of sight. Such is the science of war up to date.

Since the early days of the war methods

have considerably changed. Both sides have dug themselves in, until the allied lines stretch in one continuous chain of over 500 miles. The trenches to-day are monuments of masterly skill and construction. Gazing over a line of such earth fortifications—for that is what they are—from the summit of a hill, it is very difficult to realize that at one's feet there are thousands of men lying hidden from each other, but ready at a moment's notice to spring into deadly activity. An occasional shell bursts here and there, but beyond that the characteristics are apparently peaceful; such is the appearance at the present stage of warfare. But it must be always borne in mind this is only preparatory to great and far-reaching movements.

Ever and again a scrap takes place, and a few hundreds or thousands of yards of trenches are taken or lost. To the ordinary civilian mind this all seems very haphazard, but it is not so; every

movement is made with a purpose, and the result carefully noted by the master mind behind the whole.

The first battle of Ypres lasted somewhere about a month. Since then other sanguinary battles have taken place on the ground which has become historic. But October and November, 1914, will ever stand in the annals of war as the occasion of one of England's greatest triumphs, for notwithstanding Germany's costly endeavours to reach the coast, she failed.

CONCERNING OFFICERS AND MEN

CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING OFFICERS AND MEN

IN considering the constituent elements of an army, the first avenue of thought must lead to the primary essential —discipline. The realization of this most important military virtue is one of the most difficult for the young soldier to apprehend and appreciate, and yet it must underly the whole system of the army. By discipline, I do not merely mean smartness, which is involved in quick and correct response to the word of command; that, of course, is part of it; but I refer more particularly to that grip of self which enables a man to force himself into subjection to authority, which may be entirely inimical to his own will. One of the most striking

illustrations of this remarkable mental condition came under my notice on October 27, 1914. I had ridden up to the front to see some of the men in my Brigade. The Grenadier and Scots Guards had for days been holding the line with dogged pluck, and now had withdrawn from the trenches for a brief respite from their most arduous duties. Falling back a mile or so, they were rejoicing in the prospect of a hot meal. Very speedily the trench fires were dug, and the dixies[1] were filled with a savoury stew; the while the men were lying about enjoying their well-earned rest. In the midst of their brief laze an urgent order came down from General Capper, commanding the men to return to the trenches immediately, as the enemy were approaching in strong force. At once the brave lads kicked out the fires and stood to attention, and moved off to a task from which many of them never

[1] Dixies: camp kettles.

returned. An eyewitness assured me that the Brigadier[1] gave the order in a voice which was broken with emotion, for he knew full well the desperate nature of the task he was setting his men. In this grand response to a most unpalatable order, the very highest discipline is noticeable; it embodies such an act of devotion to duty as reveals that mastery over self which lies at the very root of success in warfare. Such a discipline cannot fail to evoke admiration wherever it is witnessed. It is noticeable among officers and men alike, and tends to weld both in that splendid spirit of comradeship which is so peculiarly a feature of our army at the present time.

In considering the relationship of those in command and those commanded, I must deal with them separately.

(1) Officers: Many years ago—I think

[1] Brigadier-General Ruggles Brise, who was very badly wounded shortly afterwards, and returned to England.

it was during the Crimean war—*Punch* gave a very admirable setting of the British officer in two phases. In one picture was a ball-room in which the whiskered exquisites of that period were seen in the mazes of a dance, and underneath was written: 'Our officers can dance.' The next picture revealed the same men charging up to the guns at the head of their men, and underneath the words: 'But by jingo they can fight too.' There is no doubt that the English officer is good at enjoying himself, and no small blame to him, but when it comes to the stern days of war, he is as keen and gallant as ever. It must have struck the most casual observer that the proportion of officer casualties during this war is entirely disproportionate to the numbers engaged. Again and again this striking fact has met with the severe stricture of those competent to judge; but it is useless to attempt to alter the glorious traditions of the English army

in this respect: our officers will lead; and although it may be at a terrible cost, the results are seen in the splendid backing up of the men. In the early days of the war, on more than one occasion, I met with such a remark from working men as 'Let the rich do their bit.' I hold that they have done it, and done it magnificently. No one can read the list of casualties without being struck with the enormous number of what I may call the cultured classes which have fallen in the operations we are engaged in. Indeed, there is hardly a titled family in England but is mourning its dead. Our young officers are entering action with a wild abandónment which it is impossible to realize unless witnessed. Writing home to his people, a subaltern recently declared that he was at the top of the fulness of life. Small wonder that our men will go anywhere and do anything behind such magnificent leading as our officers are giving them.

But this splendid attribute of the British officer is not only seen amid the excitement of conflict. At the end of a weary march when all alike are fagged out and ready to throw themselves upon the earth and rest, the first consideration on the part of the officers is the men; their food, their billets; and when these important questions are dealt with, then, and not till then, with wearied frames, these gallant gentlemen begin to think of themselves. This evokes a feeling which I may not inaptly style, hero worship, on the part of the men. Frequently, in describing the glorious death of some favourite officer, a man has said to me, 'I loved him like a brother'; and this condition of regard is mutual, for it is no uncommon thing (on the occasion of the departure of the 'leave' train) to see an officer, frequently of senior rank, on spotting in the crowd a non-commissioned officer, or private, from his regiment, go up to him and with a

hearty grip of the hand, say, 'Well, my lad, hope you have had a good time!' Such a state of things would, of course, be impossible in the German army, but we Englishmen have proved that the most solid foundation of a true relationship between officers and men is respect and love, and right happy are the results attained.

(2) Our men: It is not possible to speak too highly of the splendid manhood embodied in our ranks to-day. Their language is certainly reprehensible, but after all we must realize that their vocabulary is not an extensive one, and the employment of adjectives which, to a refined ear, sounds deplorable, is only used by them to describe an intensity which no other words they possess would be capable of rendering. I am, of course, not referring to blasphemy or obscenity, which is immediately checked by every right-minded man in authority.

During the whole of my experience in

Flanders, I did not come across one case of drunkenness; my experience may be peculiar, but I do not think so. To begin with, there is, of course, the very strong deterrent of rigid punishment for such an offence. Again, there are not the facilities for the purchase of strong drink, such as unhappily characterizes the condition of affairs in Great Britain; but away and beyond these preventives lies the fact that every man is imbued with the idea that he must keep himself fit and 'play the game,' and the result is that at the Front to-day we have a sober army. I cannot too strongly warn the men who are at home, preparing for the Front, to watch themselves closely in this respect, and for the following reasons:—

(*a*) A man who drinks renders himself physically unfit for the tremendous strain involved by a campaign. A short time ago

I was travelling in France, from General Head-quarters to Bailleul, and riding past a certain Brigade which had landed two days prior, I was struck with the very considerable portion of men who had fallen out on the march. This was partly due to the very painful process of marching over cobbled stones to which they were new, but I knew full well that it was also attributable to the fact of the soft condition which some of the foolish fellows were in, through the unwise use of stimulants in the near past.

(*b*) Sobriety is an absolute essential, for again and again the security of a Platoon, a Company, a Battalion, a Brigade, or even of Division, may depend upon the alertness of a sentinel.

We observe, therefore, the urgent importance of a man placed in so responsible a position being in the fullest possession of his powers of mind and body ; therefore, I say with emphasis, and I say it to every man going out, keep clear of the drink.

One cannot fail to be struck with the supineness of certain Generals who, possessing the power of placing public houses out of bounds, excepting for one hour morning and evening, yet allow the men under their command to soak in bar parlours for hours at a time. There are magnificent exceptions to this, and all honour to those Divisional Commanders who have taken the trouble to ascertain the conditions of social life under which their men exist when off duty, and who make adequate provision for the ordinary means of recreation and enjoyment.

But to pass to the men of whom we are all so justly proud. Their cheerfulness

is truly remarkable, and indeed it requires somewhat of the spirit of a Mark Tapley to 'stick it' in such weather as characterized the campaign of last winter.

Their hopefulness, too, is a glorious possession, and a grand incentive to any man. *Nil desperandum* is the watchword which flashes down the ranks of our men, even in the tightest corners.

Their courage! who can describe it? for it stands at the very apex of human glory. Again and again the enemy has paid admiring tribute to the splendid dash and invincible determination evinced by our men. I am confident that if it were only a question of man against man, the war would speedily be ended.

I have had many opportunities of watching the fortitude of our brave lads. I should be sorry indeed to attempt to describe what one has witnessed in field dressing stations; suffice it to say that in moments of greatest agony

I have seen men bite their lips almost to the flow of blood, rather than emit a groan. Such are the men to whom England has committed her honour, her prestige, even her destiny; and the commission has not been made in vain.

In dealing with 'our men' it would be a serious omission not to pay a tribute to the remarkable collection of Imperial manhood which is now gathered together under our flag. I need not refer to the Canadians or Australians, for they are of our own flesh and blood, but the Indian soldier deserves a word of high appreciation. Side by side with his white brother in arms he has fought magnificently. True, his methods of warfare are different, but in their own particular manner they are just as effective. One of their officers described to me the very great relish with which the Ghurkas approach a German trench. Slinking over the ground with the stealthiness of tigers, kukri between

their teeth, they lie silently under the thrown up earth, then flipping a piece of dirt into the air, wait for the German's head to be suspiciously raised; a flash of the keen knife, and the German ceases to exist! No wonder that such men are regarded with terror by the Huns. One day, when a batch of prisoners were brought in, an Indian approached one of them with a broad grin; displaying his teeth, which shone like pearls, he proceeded to show his good feeling towards the German by stroking the man, as a token of amity; but the poor fellow before him imagined that he was seeking a soft place in which to insert his deadly knife, and fairly howled with terror.

From a military point of view one of the strangest aspects of this campaign has been the little use made of cavalry during the first battle of Ypres, and indeed right up to the present the horses of our cavalry have, for the most

part, not been required. It was strange to see the Household Cavalry working in the trenches side by side with infantry of the Line, but doing their work as effectively, and uncomplainingly, as any other section of the army.

As the winter draws on apace, the heart of England will once more open in a response to the necessary comforts which her brave sons call for at her hands, and for which they will not call in vain. Let me give a few hints: Tobacco and cigarettes are, of course, always in demand, and under the peculiar circumstances of this nerve-racking campaign, are more or less of a necessity. Socks, too, are needed, for whether the weather is hot or cold, socks will wear out. The men dearly love sweets, such as toffee, chocolate, peppermints. Cardigan jackets—not too heavy—are largely called for; a packet containing writing paper, envelopes and an indelible pencil are very acceptable;

woollen sleeping helmets, and, of course, mittens will not be refused; boracic acid powder for sore feet; anything to do with a shaving outfit (especially safety razors) are gladly welcomed. From country districts a local paper means a great deal to a man, for it keeps him in touch with home affairs. But above all, keep up a regular correspondence with your men; it is difficult for the home folk to realize how much a letter means. A striking object lesson is afforded on the arriving of a mail, by the hurried withdrawal of the fortunate receivers of letters from the mail bag, like the lions at the Zoo which, on receiving their food, withdraw to enjoy it in solitude. In a word, our men are worth all you can do for them; do not spare yourselves in alleviating the inevitable discomforts, privations and trials which are involved in such work as they have set themselves to accomplish.

THE WORK OF A CHAPLAIN IN THE FIELD

CHAPTER VII

THE WORK OF A CHAPLAIN IN THE FIELD

IN the care of an army on active service the most complete arrangements exist for every requirement of the soldier. As far as possible nothing is omitted that will conduce to his comfort, well-being and usefulness.

His food is, as we have already seen, most scientifically devised.

His equipment is adjusted on the most anatomical principles.

His arms are the most up to date that science and money can provide.

His medical and surgical supplies are the most perfect that science can apply.

And not least, his spiritual needs are increasingly well attended to. There are over six hundred chaplains now in the field.

Many people have queer notions as to the methods and objects of a chaplain's work. Some years ago I was on my way to conduct a Mission in Yorkshire, when I happened to meet an R.A.M.C. friend. On my telling him of the errand upon which I was bound, he expressed some surprise, and displayed complete ignorance as to the character of my intending duty. Accordingly I endeavoured to remove his ignorance by establishing a parallel between his work and mine. I pointed out that in the visitation of the hospital wards at Aldershot he doubtless became inter-

ested in his patients, especially any uncommon or obstinate cases, and to these he would pay especial attention, applying every specific which lay within his knowledge. In pursuance of my purpose I then proceeded to point out that a clergyman's work proceeded upon precisely the same scientific lines. First of all a diagnosis of the difficulties was made, then the specific was applied, but with this difference ; medical science is again and again beaten by the ignorance of the precise remedy to apply, even presuming that it has been discovered ; whereas the clergyman sets before his patient the unfailing Christ, Who is sufficient for every need of sinful man. I left him I hope somewhat enlightened as to the definite character of a clergyman's ministry. The difficulty of my friend is much the same as that experienced by a large number of people as regards the work of a padré in the field. Let me set before you the different phases of the work

which commonly fall within the allotted sphere of a chaplain's duty at the Front.

To begin with there are now two[1] chaplains appointed to a Brigade (in the early days of the war there was only one, and he was usually attached to a Field Ambulance), the one is more particularly responsible for the active men of the Brigade, whilst the other works with the Field Ambulance. (Each Brigade consists of from three to five thousand men and has a Field Ambulance attached to it.)

(1) As occasion offers church parades are held, to which the attendance is compulsory. But many a time the padré will arrange voluntary services of the most informal character; in barns, in a wood, sometimes in the reserve trenches. The chaplain, by order, has no

[1] There are now three appointed to each Brigade.

right in the firing trenches except on urgent duties: such as ministering to the men, or conducting funerals.

(2) Men who are communicants greatly value the Means of Grace, and possibly the great sacrament of the Lord's Supper is never administered under more remarkable circumstances than at the Front. At times the setting of the service is of the very crudest form, but none the less it is highly prized. I know full well the objection that is felt by some clergy to Evening Communion, but in the British Expeditionary Force at times it is absolutely necessary, unless the Church is prepared to practically excommunicate men for a longer or shorter period. I may add that personally I have

no sympathy with limiting the Means of Grace instituted by our Blessed Redeemer to any particular hour of the day, and certainly the Divine Institution was made after the Last Supper, or during that meal.

(3) One of the saddest features of the padré's round of duty is the burial of the dead. Funerals often take place in the firing line, or immediately behind it, when, of course, the ceremony is of the very briefest duration. At others the remains of the brave dead are interred in the nearest cemetery, but in either case, as far as possible, a cross is placed on the grave recording the name, number and regiment of the interred. The visitation of the dying, especially during a

'push,' entails a great deal of time on the part of the chaplain. If the dying man is conscious and realizes his position, there will be the last messages for the loved ones at home; the disposition of property; the setting right of some existent wrong; for as the moment of dissolution approaches, men's minds are usually keenly alive to the urgency of the position.

(4) One of the most harrowing duties is ministering to the wounded, especially in the Field Dressing Station of an Ambulance, where the men are first attended to after being brought in from the field. Their condition is often indescribable, and opportunities of a word of comfort abound. Even as a man lies upon the table, his

wounds being probed and dressed, the Message of God, coupled sometimes with so material a solace as the placing of a cigarette between the lips of the sufferer, will help him to bear his agony. In Casualty Clearing and Base Hospitals there are, of course, always a number of sick to be visited, and this work falls within the region of ordinary civilian hospital work. In many cases where a man is first hit and he is not in a too collapsed condition, his first thought is of home ; and a painful anxiety is often evinced by the sufferer to get a message through, describing his condition, before his name appears in the casualty list ; for, unhappily, no distinction is made in the published lists between slight and serious cases.

(5) All this involves a large amount of correspondence on the part of the chaplain, and there are busy times when a 'scrap' is proceeding. Every spare moment is occupied with writing letters for those who are unable to do so themselves. On the top of all his other work the padré is constantly receiving letters from home, asking him as to the whereabouts of this or that man, who may be dead, wounded or missing; and this phase of the work of itself takes up a great deal of time.

(6) A not unimportant duty which falls to a chaplain's lot is the recreation of the men, and if he is a good sort he will endeavour, during periods of rest, to enliven the lot of his men with sing-songs, boxing competitions,

football matches, athletic sports, etc., etc.—anything to buck up the men and keep them cheery. In addition to this, many nondescript duties fall to the chaplain's lot. Sometimes he is mess president, and that will give him an anxious half hour. The solicitude of a young wife who asked a matron of mature experience as to the best method of keeping the affection of her husband and preserving his interest in the home, was answered by, 'Feed the brute.' A mess president knows to the full what this means. The padré will sometimes have difficult and perchance dangerous work allotted to him, such as carrying messages under fire, or tending wounded men in exposed places. He must also be prepared to lend a hand in carrying

the wounded; and, in short, render himself as useful as possible, and thus prove himself a friend of officer and man.

The question is often asked, 'Should a chaplain be under fire?' It is impossible to avoid it if he is serving troops under fire, and he must take his chance with every one else. Many times I have been asked, 'Were you afraid?' I am only a normal person, not conspicuous for undue pluck on the one hand, or, I hope, undue funk on the other, but I never got over my fear; of course one grew accustomed to the deadly visitants which were constantly in our midst. After all, if there is no fear, there is no courage. I sometimes hear of men, of whom it is said, 'They do not know what fear is.' Well, if that is so, such an individual is devoid of courage, for the very essence of courage consists in the appreciation of fear, and a persistence

in duty notwithstanding. Doctor Johnson was passing through a cathedral when he noticed a tomb on which was written, 'Here lies the body of a man who never knew fear.' 'Then,' said the witty Doctor, 'he never tried to snuff a lighted candle with his fingers.' General Gordon has told us that he was always subject to fear. 'For my part,' he once said, "I am always frightened and very much so.' And yet no one in history has a reputation more honestly earned for this real kind of courage, a courage won by personal victory over fear. Herein lies the essence of the experience of the vast majority of our men; fearing fire, and loathing it as they do, they yet 'stick' it, because it is their duty.

It is astonishing how soon one grows accustomed to death at the Front. It cannot well be otherwise; the man you have been chatting to five minutes before is presently borne along dead. The officer who was the life and soul of the

mess on the previous night, in some ruined farmhouse, is gone before the morning; and as a man well put it, 'Dying men out here are as common as falling leaves in autumn.'

The religious atmosphere at the Front is unique. I can hardly say that there is what one may term a general turning to God, but certainly the realization of the nearness of God and eternity are very present to most men's minds. As a man said up at the Front, 'Out here every man puts up some kind of a prayer every night.' The superficial scepticism which is so largely ethical, or the result of indifference, and which is assumed by many men in England, has no hold at the Front. One of our best known Bishops was telling me when I met him 'somewhere in France' that a short time back he was about to conduct a service in a hospital ward, in his own city, and upon handing a hymn book to one of the patients lying in bed,

he was met with, 'Thank you, I would rather not, I am an agnostic.' Hearing this, the man in the next bed raised himself up on his elbow, and looking at the objector, tersely remarked, 'You silly young fool, a week at the trenches would take that nonsense out of you.' Undoubtedly our men are being awakened to the tremendous reality of eternal verities, and it behoves us to help them all we can. In this respect the experience of the padré is intensely happy; no work on which he engages is more fruitful than that of upholding Christ before men who have come near the end of their earthly course. Said an officer to me—who had just been brought in badly wounded, and I had written to his wife assuring her that all was being done to alleviate his suffering and to effect his recovery (which happily took place)—'Padré, I have been a wild man all my life, but last night as I lay wounded in the trenches, for the first time I realized

God, and perfect peace came into my heart.'

A captain in the Guards, badly hit through the lungs with shrapnel, demanded a good bit of my attention When he was sent to the Base I hardly. thought that he would survive the journey; however, in due course he reached England. Some months afterwards I received a letter from his mother, stating that her boy was slowly climbing back to recovery, and thanking me for what I had been able to do for him; which was little enough. At the bottom of the letter was a postscript: 'My darling boy died at twelve to-day. Just before he passed away he said, "Mother, I am in perfect peace with God. Give my love to padré."' Those are the kind of things that make a man thank God for having volunteered to do one's 'bit' in that particular line of life in which he has been placed. No work is grander than a chaplain's; but I must lay it

down as a general axiom, that no man should undertake this particular kind of work unless he knows that he is charged with a message from God.

In the Neuve Chapelle dispatch, Sir John French writes: 'I have once more to remark upon the devotion to duty, courage and contempt of danger which has characterized the work of the chaplains throughout this campaign.' The padré's work is not to fight; indeed, he is not armed (anyhow, he is not allowed to be by the authorities); and certainly one of the difficulties experienced is to withhold oneself as one sees the brave lads go to their daring and glorious work.

Ambassador of Christ, you go
Up to the very gates of hell,
Through fog of powder, storm of shell,
To speak your Master's message: 'Lo,
The Prince of Peace is with you still,
His peace be with you, His goodwill.'

It is not small, your priesthood's price
To be a man and yet stand by,

To hold your life while others die,
To bless, not share the sacrifice,
To watch the strife and take no part—
You with the fire at your heart.

W. M. Letts, in the *Spectator*.

THE CARE OF THE WOUNDED

CHAPTER VIII

THE CARE OF THE WOUNDED

AMONG the many sad sights witnessed in modern warfare, I question whether there is any more pathetic than a train of wounded men passing down from the Front. Every description of injury is noticeable, for shot and shell are not discriminating. From cases of the severest abdominal and head wounds, the patient being in a more or less collapsed condition, one turns to the laughing lad, with only a clean shot through his forearm, and who still has the exciting influence of the 'scrap' thickly upon him. But slight or dangerous, each requires attention, for owing to the grave danger of septic trouble, the smallest scratch may prove fatal.

In their handling of the enormous number of casualties, the work of the R.A.M.C. will stand out in luminous letters when the history of the war is written. From sanitation, to a major operation, this Department is equal to the occasion, and one is lost in admiration at the splendid devotion to duty exhibited by this strictly scientific branch of the service.

Wounded men always possess a sad and enthralling interest to the public mind. It is not morbid curiosity alone which draws men and women to gaze upon the unhappy sufferers, rather I think it is a feeling akin to awe, for it is recognized that these men have been in the thick of it, and the imagination of the onlookers sees the courage they have displayed, and peering through the veil beholds the terrible sights they have seen. These, and similar thoughts cast a glamour over the most ordinary wounded man, and clothe him with a

heroism which in all probability he of all men is most unconscious of possessing.

The variety of circumstances under which men get wounded is unbounded. Multitudes of those bowled over have never seen a German. It may be far back in the rear that a 'Jack Johnson' or 'Black Maria' (for we have many names for the German high explosive) has knocked a man out. It is all over in a moment; in the quiet of the night, or amid the bustle of the day the deadly shriek of an approaching shell falls upon the man's ear, and before he can seek for cover—even supposing there is any to hand—the roar of the explosion will probably be the last thing that he will remember before he awakes to his agony. Or nearer to the line, the whistle of an approaching shrapnel speaks of coming danger, and then a prone figure on the ground tells of one more who has been 'pipped,' to use a

colloquialism of the Front. When we consider the extreme range of a seventeen-inch gun as being not far short of thirty miles, the difficulty of being out of range is at once apparent. Nearer at hand, within a few yards, an accurately thrown bomb is a fruitful source of injury to our fighting men, whilst in these days of accurate rifle fire 'snipers' mark the slightest movement at a thousand yards. In the fierce rush of the taking of a trench, men are as thick on the ground as the leaves of Vallombrosa. At such times, notwithstanding the specific orders to the contrary, men are constantly helping each other. For brotherly love will assert itself even amid the rush of battle. Here is an order from the 'Standing Orders' of the Seventh Division:—

'Wounded men.—All ranks are forbidden to divert their attention from the enemy in order to attend wounded officers or men.'

But notwithstanding this command, again and again heroic deeds are performed by combatants in their endeavour to get their wounded comrades out of imminent danger.

It was a noble deed of the Rev. Nevile Talbot, who, learning that his brother in the Rifle Brigade was hit, rushed into the zone of fire, only to find his beloved relative dead; straightway he immediately diverted his attention to the need of a wounded 'Tommy' near by. The Rev. and Honourable B. M. Peel was badly hit in the head and left leg, in charging with the Welsh Fusiliers; true, he had no right to be there from a military point of view, but I believe the O.C. had given him permission, and certainly his heroic action inspired the men, and has left a splendid memory in the minds of those who were with him. In such ways the front line of casualties occur. How are they dealt with? I will describe as briefly as possible the

procedure which governs the handling of the wounded from the fighting line to the Convalescent Home in England.

(1) Nearly every Battalion has its Regimental Surgeon and Bearers ; the latter are men who are specially trained to render First Aid, and to carry the wounded out of the zone of immediate fire.

(2) At this point the stricken one is taken in hand by the Bearer Section of the Field Ambulance, under the command of an R.A.M.C. officer, who, where necessary, quickly renders First Aid by applying a tourniquet where there is arterial bleeding, or bandaging up an ordinary wound. These men, whether attached to the Field Ambulance or a regiment, are worthy

of the highest praise. No courage is of a higher order than that which enables men, devoid of the excitement of fighting, to pass within the deadly hail of lead.

(3) The wounded man is then conveyed to the Field Dressing Station of the Field Ambulance. This may be located in a deserted building: a barn, a farmhouse, or some such place. It may be even placed behind a haystack, or in a wood, but certainly in the most sheltered position that can be found. Here the man's wound receives more careful attention, but with a rush of such cases it is impossible to bestow all the care that is desired. Very hurriedly the man's clothing is cut open, the wound cleansed with

iodine, or some such disinfectant, bandaged up again, and the sufferer is ready for evacuation to a Casualty Clearing Station.

(4) Some miles behind the firing line, a convent, schools, or any suitable house, or group of buildings, has been set apart as a hospital, and under the present system greater assistance can now be rendered to the patient. Even operations may be performed if the case is one of special urgency. At this point I would call attention to the remarkable revolution that has taken place in the transport of the wounded, through the agency of Motor Ambulances, in lieu of the pair horse Ambulance formerly in use, and which rumbled along the uneven roads,

thereby causing an intolerable amount of suffering to the badly stricken men therein. The sufferers are now conveyed swiftly, and with far greater comfort, to their temporary destinations; and hundreds of lives are being preserved by means of this miracle of modern times.

(5) The hospital train at the 'rail head' which serves the district is the next experience of the wounded man. Those who have examined these wonderful accessories to modern warfare will have been struck by the completeness of the arrangements. Beds of the most comfortable description, having regard to space, are provided, whilst sitting cases are arranged for in ordinary carriages. Furnished with a well-appointed

kitchen, nothing is left to be desired as regards the food, and this, I need hardly say, appeals very strongly to a man who has been living upon Army rations for weeks or months past. There is even a small operating theatre in the best equipped hospital trains.

(6) This brings us to the Base Hospital, where is found the finest talent, both medical and surgical, that the country can produce. Some of our greatest civilian medical men, in a temporary capacity, are now rendering invaluable aid to the remarkable cases which proceed from the fell work of shot and shell. These hospitals, some of which are due to the magnificent enterprise of private individuals, provide for a very

large number of patients. In one centre alone there are eight hospitals, with fourteen beds in each. Here, too, are working the most highly trained nursing sisters, and the wounded man will, to his dying day, remember the patient skill bestowed upon him by these devoted women. A patient recently remarked to a friend of mine, who asked him whether he didn't think the sister was an angel, 'Indeed she is, sir, a regular fallen angel.' His adjective was a little out of place, but he meant to describe exactly what we all feel with regard to these splendid ministers to our need.

(7) The hospital ship next receives the sufferer, and herein everything that modern ingenuity can devise is applied to the

necessities of the case. Landing at some convenient British port, an English hospital train receives the wounded man, who is speedily whirled away to—

(8) The Home Hospital, where, of course, the man remains under the ablest care, until he is happily classified a convalescent.

(9) The Convalescent Home is perhaps the happiest stage of the whole curriculum, and Tommy runs a chance of being spoiled ere he is ready for the fighting line, or, in case of permanent disablement, for the care of his own kith and kin.

I must not forget the remarkable qualities of the Orderlies of the R.A.M.C. I have often been struck with the tender

care and solicitude which they bestow upon the wounded coming under their attention. In their ranks are found all sorts and conditions of men: clergymen, medical students; indeed, the premier Earl of Scotland, the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, enlisted as a Private in the R.A.M.C. and is now a Corporal in a Field Ambulance. Such an example cannot fail to place this distinguished branch of the Service on the highest level of utility and importance.

So far, I have more particularly dealt with the care of the wounded. This, however, is only one side of the vast work under the care of the medical side of the Army. With the lamentable effect of the evil of bad water experienced in the South African war, the Authorities have been most drastic in their insistence of a pure water supply to the Army. To-day every unit has its filter cast, and most urgent orders are in circulation forbidding men to

drink from any other supply. This alone has prevented a large amount of disease.

One of the ills that our men have to contend with is 'feet.' No one, excepting those who have had to march on French and Belgian roads, can realize the pernicious effect of cobbled stones, with their many inequalities, upon the feet of the men; hence in every well-commanded Battalion frequent feet inspections are held—in many instances daily. This simple preventive, coupled with a copious supply of socks sent out by the people at home, has helped the great majority of 'Tommies' to keep their pedal extremities in going order.

The inspection of kit, from a sanitary point of view, is another important phase of the hygienic question. Where men have to exist for days without a change of clothing, it will be readily understood that the effect is extremely prejudicial to health, and therefore a medical super-

vision of the clothing of the men is of supreme value to their health. In many places facilities for hot baths are provided for the men coming out of the trenches, and greatly is this boon prized. One of the commonest sights behind the firing line is a detachment of men swinging along, with towels in their hands, on their way to or fro the tub.

In some places whilst the men are in the bath their clothes are carefully disinfected, and then handed back to them thoroughly cleansed and fit for further use. Notwithstanding all these precautions, there is, of course, a certain amount of sickness which is inevitable among so great a number of men, but it is insignificant in proportion to the numbers employed. After many months with troops I can emphatically say that the bodily care of our men, by the medical authorities, is beyond all praise, and has done much to preserve the redundant health which is characteristic of our

Army in the field. 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness,' and I must add that it comes in a good second in the British Expeditionary Force in Flanders and France.

WORK AT THE BASE

CHAPTER IX

WORK AT THE BASE

AT various centres in France are established Bases, where all the necessary supplies and ammunition are landed, and thence transported to the various Units in the Field. To cope with this vast system of distribution an army of men is employed. It will help the reader to form an estimate of the labour involved in this enormous undertaking if I briefly refer to the various branches of the British Expeditionary Force which are specially engaged in ministering to the Force as a whole.

(1) *Army Service Corps.*—These are men drilled and practised in supply and transport. They are

ubiquitous, and without them it would be impossible to maintain the operations in hand.

(2) *Army Ordnance Department.*— The men of this section are skilled in the manipulation of ammunition, and in the tabulation and distribution of a hundred and one articles of equipment. It is a striking object lesson to make a tour of inspection of this important Department of the Army. It would be interesting to know how many hundreds of thousands of miles of barbed wire have passed through the hands of the A.O. during the war. Everything from a screw to a howitzer comes within their attention. As to the supply of guns and ammunition I am, of course, forbidden to say anything, excepting to share with

my fellow-countrymen the greatest satisfaction that the grave difficulty noticeable earlier in the war has to so large an extent been overcome.

(3) *Army Medical Stores.*—Here again we have another striking object lesson in the wonders of detail. Everything required by Hospitals, Field Ambulances, Casualty Clearing Stations is herein stored and ready to be dispatched in response to the indents which are daily pouring in; the requirements of the R.A.M.C., from a surgical bandage to an operating table—to say nothing of drugs—must be ready for use. This involves the most careful attention on the part of the staff, which is, of course, composed of picked men.

(4) *Railway Engineers.* — In each Base will be found one or more companies of Sappers, who are responsible for the maintenance of telegraphic and telephonic communications, within the area of the Base ; and also the construction and upkeep of military railway lines and buildings.

(5) *Sanitary Department.*—In Bases where permanent Garrisons are stationed (in some instances amounting to many thousands) much care must be exercised with regard to the ordinary hygienic conditions of life ; and under highly qualified officers the most careful supervision is exercised in this respect.

(6) *Army Post Office.*—The correspondence of the Expeditionary Force is enormous, and involves a large staff in keeping 'Tom-

my' well posted with news from home. The efficiency of this important adjunct to our Army is as highly valued as it is admirably carried out.

(7) *Army Bakers.*—The men composing this Unit are of course selected from a particular calling. Their work is beyond all praise. In one Base with which I was more particularly connected during the latter part of my service abroad, no less than 220,000 two and a half pound loaves are baked daily. This represents bread rations for 440,000 men. The labour involved in such a vast production is very great. Weekday and Sunday alike the Army Bakers are grandly proceeding with their monotonous but most necessary work. So complete is the

system employed in the making and distributing of 'the staff of life' that no Unit, however far distant, receives bread older than four days. A French General of high position, lately visiting one such Bakery, expressed his unbounded admiration at the system employed, saying that in the French Army bread fifteen days old is very usually met with.

(8) *Army Service Corps Labourers.*—These men are specially enlisted from stevedores, dock labourers, etc. Their work consists, in the main, of unloading vessels, and shipping supplies on to trains.

(9) *Remounts and Veterinary Department.*—It would rejoice the hearts of all lovers of dumb animals to visit these great

repositories of whole, sick and injured horses. The saving in horse flesh represented by these carefully administered camps is of the utmost value to the Army as a whole, for although motor transport is playing so important a part, horses are a necessity in many phases of Army work.

(10) *Military Police.*—Under the Assistant Provost Marshal, a military Base is controlled by a staff of picked men, who do their work most admirably. Their duties are varied; they have the oversight of the conduct of the men, and are most particular in regard to the appearance of men in public. Woe be to the man who is not properly dressed as he passes under the lynx-eye of one of these military custo-

dians of the peace. Such supervision is not even altogether uncalled for among the officers of the new Army; one has been much struck with the slovenly, and at times grotesque, appearance of men who have suddenly assumed the position of officers and gentlemen. The somewhat apt epigram which is current today, is not wholly unmerited, 'Temporary officers are expected to behave as temporary gentlemen.'

(11) *Convalescent Camps.*—On men leaving hospitals, prior to their rejoining their Units at the Front, they are usually placed in Convalescent Camps, or in what are called Base Details. Here they are employed in various light duties until such times as they are fit for more active service.

It was at a Base comprising a Garrison of such Units as I have mentioned that I spent the greater part of my closing months of service in the Army. I was not attached to any hospital, but had placed in my care the greater part of what I may call the active men. The work was of the most interesting description, and following as it did a strenuous experience with the fighting forces, I am enabled, in consequence, to form a fairly sound judgment on the work of the British Expeditionary Force as a whole.

On leaving home on March 16 for a fresh spell of service, I proceeded in obedience to orders received, and reported myself to Doctor Sims, the principal chaplain, and received from him my orders as to my allocation. On reaching my Base I was most cordially received by the Rev. E. G. F. McPherson, C.M.G., Senior Church of England Chaplain to the Forces. This officer, who ranks as Colonel, has had many years

of distinguished service in the Army, and is universally respected. Prior to his taking up the position which he occupied when I reported to him, he was in the retreat from Mons and the battle of the Aisne. The regard evinced for him by all ranks is unbounded. On one occasion I was with him visiting padrés at the Front, when an officer pointing to him said, 'There goes the best loved man in the Army,' and I can well believe it. He is at the present time rendering very important service with the Southern Command, in the Salisbury training centre.

Allocated to me were the A.S.C., Army Ordnance, Mechanical Transport Base Regiment (employed on Guard duty), Firing parties at funerals, Escorts, etc., Military Police, Army Bakers, and A.S.C. Labourers.

My work at the Base necessarily differed largely from that at the Front. The men being stationed at one place it was possible to arrange a regular system of

services; but these were at times exceedingly difficult to sustain, owing to the very heavy pressure of work with which the men had to cope; but notwithstanding such difficulties and discouragements, I have every reason to be thankful for the great opportunity which was afforded me.

It was my privilege to prepare men for Baptism, and on two occasions for Confirmation. This solemn rite of our Church was taken on the one occasion by Bishop Bury, and on the other by the Bishop of Birmingham; at each service admirable addresses were delivered.

The Bishop of Birmingham—an old Territorial officer—has taken the greatest interest in the work of the British Expeditionary Force, and is thoroughly conversant with the whole line at the Front.

It was a great pleasure to meet the Bishop of London, just before Easter, on his way to the firing line, where he re-

ceived a wonderful welcome from all ranks.

Spiritual work among soldiers is very real and deep. I question whether there is any more difficult place for a man to endeavour to live up to his convictions than in the Army; and to the Christian soldier, one of the surest tests of the reality of his religious profession is the simple matter of saying his prayers in the barrack room or tent. If a man persistently does that, you may be sure there is something real in his profession.

I have already alluded to the deep impression created by the experience of being under fire. A somewhat remarkable instance in support of this condition of mind came under my notice a few weeks ago. The officer to whom it relates will, I am sure, pardon my introducing his experience to point my moral. He was standing with a brother officer amid the ruins of Ypres, when, realizing that the position was distinctly 'unhealthy' owing to the heavy shelling which had

commenced, he suggested a withdrawal from the locality. They had walked but a short distance, when a high explosive shell burst behind them, and a piece of the casing whizzed between their heads. 'That was a near shave,' said one; 'let's go back and see where it fell.' It had fallen on the precise spot where they had been standing but a minute or so before. The result of the condition of mind produced by this remarkable 'let off' was a visit to the chaplain's office. On asking what I could do for him the officer replied, 'I hardly know, but I want your help. I have never been baptized, so I suppose I ought to be baptized and confirmed.' I pointed out to him that prior to the participation in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, he had to settle with himself his personal relationship with Christ. By the goodness of God I believe that point was clearly established in his mind, and it was my privilege to baptize him, and then pre-

sent him for Confirmation at the hands of the Bishop of Birmingham.

This affords another illustration of the wonderful working of a man's mind who comes face to face with Eternity and the reality of God. Some men at home will possibly be inclined to sneer at such a condition of mind, but those of us who have been through it know full well the emptiness of such home-bred objections, which certainly do not hold amid the issues of life and death which are found at the Front.

I have met many friends at the Base, both among officers and men. It is a pleasing duty to record the gratitude I owe to those in command for their invariable courtesy to me, in the prosecution of my work, and the splendid personal support rendered to me. The personal influence of the officers goes far in securing the sympathy of the men.

I have never had more attentive congregations than those which have formed

the various Church Parades and voluntary gatherings which fell to my lot to conduct whilst working at the Base.

On one occasion it fell to me to conduct a 'Quiet Day' for Chaplains, Hospital Nurses and Orderlies, and responsible though the work was, we felt it to be a great lift up, coming as it did amid the stress of a very arduous life.

I frequently had the experience of visiting the different sections of the Front, and on two occasions in particular gave addresses to gatherings of chaplains, drawn from various Divisions. Those were unique occasions, for one felt the tremendous responsibility of trying to help men engaged in such important work. I knew that I was addressing heroes without exception, men who were daily counting their lives cheap for Christ's sake.

A most interesting experience befell me on June 18. With a brother chaplain I was visiting in the neighbourhood of

Ypres, when ascending a small hill from which one could survey the whole l ne of trenches, extending from Zonnebec to Ploegstreete, we passed by some reserve trenches in which were a considerable number of men, resting from their duties in the front ine trenches. I had taken with me in the car a large number of packets of cigarettes, generously sent out by my parishioners, and on asking the lads if they wanted any, I speedily found myself at the head of a great following, like the Pied P per of Hamelin. The men streamed after me in hundreds down to the lane some distance off, where the car was waiting. It did not take many minutes to hand out a big supply of smokes. While thus engaged, a sergeant made himself known to me as having heard me give an address down at the Base, and with considerable *naïveté* he said, 'Cannot you give us a talk here, sir?' Of course I could! and in less than five minutes there were hundreds of

men most picturesquely grouped on the hillside. It was touching to see their faces as I spoke to them of 'the greatest thing in the world,' the Love of God in Christ Jesus; and as I built up my argument of the Divine love by means of the illustration of the love of home, many a clear eye glistened. As I closed, I pointed out to them the unique occasion of our meeting, June 18, 1915, therefore the centenary of the Battle of Waterloo. There we were actually on Belgian soil, almost within gun-sound of the celebrated battle-field itself. As we sang the National Anthem I felt that never had I heard it sung in so inspiriting a manner; and when I called for three cheers for the King, the Germans in their front line trenches,—which were certainly within earshot,—must have imagined an attack in force was about to take place. Such desultory gatherings go far to cheer a padré's heart as he proceeds on the daily round and common task.

CHAPTER X

A CLOSING WORD

[*Kindly written by* Colonel E. G. F. Macpherson, *Senior Chaplain to the Forces* (*Church of England*).]

THE completion of Mr. Kennedy's account of his work at Boulogne was not finished ere he entered into his rest. As the senior under whom he served during the latter part of his term with the Expeditionary Force, I have been asked to add a few concluding remarks, relative to his labours from the period his own narrative ends.

Part of Mr. Kennedy's sphere of work lay just outside the Base at a certain place. Here was erected a camp of wooden huts, occupied by a considerable number of A.S.C. Dock Labourers. In this camp there was no building where

the troops could pass a pleasant and innocent evening, nor was there a church within reasonable distance of the place. This, of course, was naturally a great disadvantage to any chaplain in his endeavours to get a hold upon the men. Mr. Kennedy felt the need; with him to think was to act.

He came to me and requested that I should write a letter to him, asking him (as he was going immediately on short leave to England) to do what he could to influence friends at home to supply what we both recognized was a crying need.

Although Mr. Kennedy was only away about a week, he returned with between two or three hundred pounds, to start the erection of a Hut for recreational and religious purposes.

The next thing to do was to obtain a suitable site, preferably in the midst of the camp.

Mr. Kennedy obtained the consent of the Base Commandant, and that of the

officer commanding the camp; the latter especially rendering all the assistance in his power—particularly in obtaining for us the services of a competent architect.

Plans were drawn up and approved by me. It was found that the expenses of the Church Hut would be considerably more than was at first contemplated: £600, not £400 as we thought. Mr. Kennedy appealed once more to his friends and to the readers of certain religious papers. Pecuniary assistance flowed rapidly in, and we were soon assured of enough money to build a large and commodious Church Hut. There was to be a large hall, a coffee bar, kitchen, and some small rooms.

Mr. Kennedy, in spite of much other work in which he was engaged, found time to constantly trudge to and fro to the camp, watching, with zealous care, the erection of the Hut. No less keen and interested spectators were the A.S.C.

men themselves, for it meant a great deal to them—somewhere to go to when work was done, somewhere to pass an hour or so.

Mr. Kennedy's idea was to supply wholesome refreshment, daily papers and magazines, and games to play. This during the week.

On Sundays the place was to be 'rigged,' as sailors call it, as a church. It was to be used also for Bible Classes and Instructions.

In wonderfully quick time the Hut was built, and duly opened. This latter event happened after I was called home on special duty.

Needless to say the Hut has been greatly used, both from a social and religious point of view; and has been directly and indirectly the means of much good being done. It is another monument to the life's work of a noble soul.

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